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A. D. MARCEL

"What are you doing here?"

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Envy. One of the Seven Cardinal Sins.

ILLUSTRATED WITH ETCHINGS BY ADRIAN MARCEL.

BY EUGENE SUE

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THE SEVEN CARDINAL SINS

ENVY

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Envy

FREDERICK BASTIEN

ENVY.

CHAPTER I.

In the year 1828 any tourist who was on his way from Blois to the little town of Pont Brillant to visit — as travellers seldom fail to do — the famous castle of that name, the magnificent feudal abode of the Marquises Pont Brillant, would have been obliged to pass a farm-house standing near the edge of the road, about two miles from the château.

If this lonely dwelling attracted the attention of the traveller, he would have been almost certain to have regarded it with mingled melancholy and disgust as one of the too numerous specimens of hideous rural architecture in France, even when these habitations belong to persons possessed of a competence. This establishment consisted of a large barn and storehouse, with two long wings in the rear. The interior of the sort of parallelogram thus formed served as a courtyard, and was filled with piles of manure rotting in pools of stagnant water, for cow, horse, and sheep stables all opened into this enclosure, where all sorts of domestic animals, from poultry to hogs, were scratching and rooting.

One of the wings in the rear served as the abode of the family. It was a story and a half high, and had no outlook save this loathsome courtyard, with the dirty, worm-eaten doors of the cow-stable for a horizon. On

the other side of the structure, where no window pierced the wall, stood a superb grove of century-old oaks, a couple of acres in extent, through which flowed a beautiful stream that served as an outlet for several distant lakes. But this grove, in spite of its beauty, had become well-nigh a desert on account of the large amount of gravel that had been deposited there, and the thick growth of rushes and thistles that covered it; besides, the stream, for want of cleaning out and of a sufficient fall, was becoming turbid and stagnant.

But if this same tourist had passed this same farmhouse one year afterward, he would have been struck by the sudden metamorphosis that the place had undergone, though it still belonged to the same owner. A beautiful lawn, close and fine as velvet, and ornamented with big clumps of rose-bushes, had taken the place of the dirty manure-strewn courtyard. New doors had been cut on the other side of the horse and cow stables; the old doors had been walled up, and the house itself, as well as the big barn at the foot of the courtyard, had been whitewashed and covered with a green trellis up which vigorous shoots of honeysuckle, clematis, and woodbine were already climbing.

The wing in which the family lived had been surrounded with flowering plants and shrubbery. A gravel path led up to the main doorway, which was now shaded by a broad, rustic porch with a thatched roof in which big clumps of houseleek and dwarf iris were growing. This rustic porch, overhung with luxuriant vines, evidently served as the family sitting-room. The window-frames, which were painted a dark green, contrasted strikingly with the dazzling whiteness of the curtains and the clearness of the window-panes, and on each sill was a small jardinière made of silver birch bark, and filled with freshly gathered flowers. A light fence, half concealed by roses, lilacs, and acacias, had been run from one wing of the establishment to the other, parallel

with the barn, thus enclosing this charming garden. The grove had undergone a no less complete transformation. A rich carpet of velvety turf, cut with winding walks of shining yellow sand, had superseded the rushes and thistles; the formerly sluggish stream, turned into a new bed and checked in the middle of its course by a pile of large, moss-covered rocks three or four feet high, plunged from the height in a little bubbling, dancing waterfall, then continued its clear and rapid course on a level with its grassy borders.

A few beds of scarlet geraniums, whose brilliant hues contrasted vividly with the rich, green turf, brightened this charming spot, in which the few bright sunbeams that forced their way through dense foliage made a bewitching play of light and shade, especially in the vista through which one could see in the distance the forest of Pont Brillant, dominated by its ancient castle.

The details of this complete transformation, effected in so short a time by such simple and inexpensive means, seem puerile, perhaps, but are really highly significant as the expression of one of the thousand different phases of maternal love. Yes, a young woman sixteen years of age, married when only a little over fifteen, exiled here in this solitude, had thus metamorphosed it.

It was the desire to surround her expected child with bright and beautiful objects here in this lonely spot where he was to live, that had thus developed the young mother's taste, and each pleasing innovation which she had effected in this gloomy, unattractive place, had been planned merely with the purpose of providing a suitable setting for this dear little eagerly expected child.

On the greensward in the carefully enclosed courtyard the child could play as an infant. The porch would afford a healthful shelter in case it rained or the sun was too hot. Later, when he outgrew his babyhood, he could play and run about in the shady grove, under

his mother's watchful eye, and amuse himself by listening to the soft murmur of the waterfall, or by watching it dance and sparkle along over the mossy rocks. The limpid stream, kept at a uniform depth of barely two feet now, held no dangers for the child, who, on the contrary, as soon as the warm summer days came, could bathe, whenever the desire seized him, in the crystal-clear water that filtered through a bed of fine gravel.

In this, as in many other details, as we shall see by and by, a sort of inspiration seemed to have guided this young mother in her plan of changing this untidy, ugly farmhouse into a cheerful and attractive home.

At the date at which this story begins, — the last of the month of June, 1845, — the young mother had been residing in this farmhouse for seventeen years. The shrubs in the courtyard had become trees; the buildings were almost completely hidden under a luxuriant mantle of flowering vines, while even in winter the walls and porch were thickly covered with ivy; while in the adjoining grove the melancholy murmur of the little cascade and the stream were still heard. The glass door of a large room which served at the same time as a parlour for the mother and a schoolroom for her son, now sixteen years of age, opened out upon this grove. This room likewise served as a sort of museum — one might be disposed to smile at this rather pretentious word, so we will say instead a maternal shrine or reliquary, for a large but inexpensive cabinet contained a host of articles which the fond mother had carefully preserved as precious mementoes of different epochs in her son's life.

Everything bore a date, from the infant's rattle to the crown of oak leaves which the youth had won at a competitive examination in the neighbouring town of Pont Brillant, where the proud mother had sent her son to test his powers. There, too, everything had its signifi-

cance, from the little broken toy gun to the emblem of white satin fringed with gold, which neophytes wear so proudly at their first communion.

These relics were puerile, even ridiculous perhaps, and yet, when we remember that all the incidents of her son's life with which these articles were associated had been important, touching, or deeply solemn events to this young mother living in complete solitude and idolising her son, we can forgive this worship of the past and also understand the feeling that had prompted her to place among these relics a small porcelain lamp, by the subdued light of which the mother had watched over her son during a long and dangerous illness from which his life had been saved by a modest but clever physician of Pont Brillant.

It is almost needless to say, too, that the walls of the room were ornamented with frames containing here a page of infantile, almost unformed handwriting, there a couple of verses which the youth had composed for his mother's birthday the year before. Besides there were the inevitable heads of Andromache and of Niobe, upon which the inexperienced crayon of the beginner usually bestows such drawn mouths and squinting eyes, apparently gazing in a sort of sullen surprise at a pretty water-colour representing a scene on the banks of the Loire; while the lad's first books were no less carefully preserved by the mother in a bookcase containing some admirably chosen works on history, geography, travel, and literature. A piano, a music-rack, and a drawing-table completed the modest furnishings of the room.

Late in the month of June, Marie Bastien — for that was the name of this young mother — found herself in this room with her son. It was nearly five o'clock in the afternoon, and the golden rays of the declining sun, though obstructed to some extent by the slats of the Venetian blinds, were, nevertheless, playing a lively game of hide-and-seek, now with the dark woodwork, now

with the big bouquets of fresh flowers in the china vases on the mantel.

A dozen or more superb half-open roses in a tall glass vase diffused a delightful perfume through the room, and brightened the table covered with books and papers, on either side of which the mother and son were busily writing.

Madame Bastien, though she was thirty-one years of age, did not look a day over twenty, so radiant was her enchanting face with youthful, we might almost say, virginal freshness, for the angelic beauty of this young woman seemed worthy to inspire the words so often addressed to the Virgin, "Hail, Mary, full of grace."

Madame Bastien wore a simple dress of pale blue and white striped percaline; a broad pink ribbon encircled her slender, supple waist, which a man could have easily spanned with his two hands. Her pretty arms were bare, or rather only slightly veiled with long lace mitts which reached above her dimpled elbows. Her luxuriant chestnut hair, with frequent glints of gold entangled in its meshes, waved naturally all over her shapely head. It was worn low over her ears, thus framing the perfect oval of her face, the transparent whiteness of which was charmingly set off by the delicate rose tint of her cheeks. Her large eyes, of the deepest and tenderest blue, were fringed with long lashes, a deep brown like her beautifully arched eyebrows, while the rich coral of her lips, the brilliant whiteness of her teeth, and the firmness of her perfect arms were convincing proofs of a naturally pure, rich blood, preserved so by the regular habits of a quiet, chaste life, a life concentrated in a single passion, maternal love.

Marie Bastien's physiognomy was singularly contradictory in expression, for if the shape of the forehead and the contour of the eyebrows indicated remarkable energy as well as uncommon strength of will combined with an unusual amount of intelligence, the expression

of the eyes was one of ineffable kindness, and her smile full of sweetness and gaiety, — gaiety, as two entrancing little dimples, created by the frequency of her frank smile a little way from the velvety corners of her lips, indicated beyond a doubt. In fact this young mother fully equalled her son in joyous animation, and when the time for recreation came, the younger of the two was not always the most boisterous and gay and childish by any means, and certainly, seeing the two seated together writing, one would have taken them for brother and sister instead of mother and son.

Frederick Bastien strongly resembled his mother, though his beauty was of a more pronounced and virile type. His skin was darker, and his hair a deeper brown than his mother's, and his jet black eyebrows imparted a wonderful charm to his large blue eyes, for Frederick had his mother's eyes and expression, as well as her straight nose, kindly smile, white teeth, and scarlet lips, upon which the down of puberty was already visible.

Reared in the wholesome freedom and simplicity of rural life, Frederick, whose stature considerably exceeded that of his mother, was a model of health, youth, and grace, while one seldom saw a more intelligent, resolute, affectionate, and cheery face.

It was easy to see that maternal pride had presided over the youth's toilet; though his attire was of the simplest, most inexpensive kind, yet the pretty cerise satin cravat was remarkably becoming to a person of his complexion, his shirt front was dazzling in its whiteness, there were large pearl buttons on his nankeen vest, and his hands, far from resembling the frightful paws of the average schoolboy, with dirty nails often bitten down to the quick, and grimy, ink-stained knuckles, were as well cared for as those of his young mother, and like hers were adorned with pink, beautifully kept nails of faultless colour. (Mothers of sixteen-year-old

sons will understand and appreciate these apparently insignificant details.)

As we have already remarked, Frederick and his mother, seated opposite each other at the same table, were working, or rather digging away hard, as schoolboys say, each having a volume of "The Vicar of Wakefield" to the left of them, and in front of them a sheet of foolscap which was already nearly filled.

"Pass me the dictionary, Frederick," said Madame Bastien, without raising her eyes, but extending her pretty hand to her son.

"Oh, the dictionary," responded Frederick, in a tone of mocking compassion, "the idea of being obliged to depend upon a dictionary!"

But he gave the book to his mother, not without kissing the pretty hand extended for it, however.

Marie, still without taking her eyes from her book, smiled without replying, then, placing her ivory penholder between her little teeth, which made the penholder look almost yellow in comparison, began to turn the leaves of the dictionary.

Profiting by this moment of inattention, Frederick rose from his chair, and placing his two hands upon the table, leaned over to see now far his mother had proceeded with her translation.

"Ah, ah, Frederick, you are trying to copy," said Marie, gaily, dropping the dictionary and placing her hands on the paper as if to protect it from her son's eyes. "I have caught you this time."

"No, nothing of the kind," replied Frederick, dropping into his chair again. "I only wanted to see if you were as far along as I am."

"All I know is that I have finished," responded Madame Bastien, with a triumphant air.

"What, already?" exclaimed Frederick, humbly.

As he spoke, the tall clock in the corner, after an ominous creaking and groaning, began to strike five.

"Good, it is time for recess!" exclaimed Marie, joyfully. "Do you hear, Frederick?"

And springing up, the young woman ran to her son.

"Give me ten minutes, and I will be done," pleaded Frederick, writing for dear life; "just ten minutes!"

But with charming petulance the young mother placed a paper-weight on the unfinished translation, slammed her son's books together, took his pen out of his hand, and half led, half dragged him out into the grove.

It must be admitted that Frederick offered no very determined resistance to his mother's despotic will, however.

CHAPTER II.

FIVE minutes afterward an exciting game of shuttlecock was going on between Frederick and his mother.

It was a charming picture upon which the few rays of sunshine that succeeded in making their way through the dense canopy of green shone, for every movement and attitude of the participants was instinct with agility and grace.

Marie, her eyes gleaming with mischief, her red lips wreathed with a charming smile, the rose tint in her cheeks deepening, one shapely foot extended, but with her supple form thrown well back from her slim waist upward, met the shuttlecock with her racket, then sent it flying off in an entirely different direction from what Frederick had anticipated; but not in the least discomfited, the youth, throwing back the curling locks of brown hair from his brow by a sudden toss of the head, with a quick, lithe bound skilfully intercepted the winged messenger as it was about to touch the earth, and sent it flying back to his mother, who intercepted it in her turn, and with a no less adroit blow despatched it swiftly through space again. When, after describing its parabola, it made straight for Frederick's nose, whereupon the youth, in a violent effort to interpose his racket between the rapidly descending shuttlecock and his upturned face, lost his balance and fell headlong on the thick turf, after which the laughter and oft repeated bursts of hilarity on the part of the two players necessarily put an end to the game.

After their mirth had partially subsided, the mother and son, with crimson cheeks, and eyes still swimming

with the tears their merriment had evoked, walked to a rustic bench in front of the waterfall to rest.

"Goodness, how absurd it is to laugh in this fashion!" exclaimed Frederick.

"You must admit that it does one good, though. It may be absurd to laugh so, as you say, but it consoles one to feel that only happy people like ourselves can ever give way to such mad fits of merriment."

"Yes, mother, you are right," said Frederick, resting his head on his mother's shoulder, "we are happy. As I sit here in the shade, this beautiful summer evening, with my head on your shoulder, gazing with half-closed eyes through the golden sunlight at our pretty home, while the soft murmur of the cascade fills the air, it seems to me it would be delightful to remain here just as we are for a hundred years."

And Frederick settled his head still more comfortably on his mother's shoulder, as if he would indeed like to spend an eternity there. The young mother, taking care not to disturb Frederick, bent her head a little to one side in order to lay her cheek upon his, and taking one of his hands in hers, replied:

"It is true that this corner of the earth has always been a sort of paradise for us, and but for the recollection of the month that you were so ill, I think we should find it difficult to recollect a single unhappy moment. Is that not so, Frederick?"

"You have always spoiled me so."

"M. Frederick doesn't know what he is talking about, evidently," responded Madame Bastien, with an affectation of grave displeasure. "There is nothing more disagreeable, and above all more unhappy, than a spoiled child. I should like to know what idle fancies and caprices I have ever encouraged in you, monsieur. Mention one if you can."

"I should think I could. In the first place you never give me the time to be bored, but take quite as much

interest in my diversions and pleasures as I do. I really don't know how you manage it, but time passes so quickly in your company that I cannot believe that this is the last of June, and when the first of January comes, I know I shall say the same thing."

"Oh, you needn't try to get out of answering my question by flattering me, monsieur. Just tell me when I ever spoiled you unduly, and if I am not, on the contrary, very severe and exacting, especially in relation to your hours of study?"

"Ah, you do well to boast of being exacting in that particular. Don't you share my studies as well as my play, so study has always been as amusing as recreation to me? Consequently, I maintain that if I am happy, it is due to you. If I know anything, if I am of account, in short, it is all due to you and solely to you. Have I ever left you? Everything that is good in me, I owe to you; all that is bad, my obstinacy, for example —"

"Yes, it is true that this dear little head has a will of its own," said Madame Bastien, interrupting him and kissing him on the forehead. "I don't know any one who has a stronger will than yours, but so long as you will to be the tenderest and best of sons, as you have up to the present time, why, I am not disposed to complain. Each day brings some fresh proof of the kindness and generosity of your heart, and if I needed any auxiliary to convince you, I should invoke the testimony of the friend I see coming over there," she added, pointing out some one to Frederick. "He knows you almost as well as I do, and you must admit that his sincerity is beyond all question."

The newcomer to whom Madame Bastien had alluded, and who was now advancing through the grove, was about forty years of age, a small, delicate-looking man, very carelessly dressed. He was singularly ugly, too, but his ugliness was of the clever, good-humoured type. His name was Dufour; he practised medicine at Pont

Brillant, and, by dint of skill and unremitting attention, he had cured Frederick of a serious illness the year before.

"How do you do, my dear Madame Bastien?" he said, cheerfully, as he approached the pair. "How do you do, my boy?" he added, pressing Frederick's hand cordially.

"Ah, doctor, you came just in time to get scolded," exclaimed Madame Bastien, with affectionate gaiety.

"Scolded?"

"Certainly. Isn't it more than a fortnight since you came to see us?"

"Fie! fie!" cried M. Dufour, "you must be egotistical to demand a doctor's visits with health as flourishing as yours."

"Fie!" retorted Madame Bastien, no less gaily, "and what right have you, pray, to so disdain the gratitude of those you have saved as to deprive them of the pleasure of saying to him often, very often, 'Thank you, my preserver, thank you'?"

"Yes, my mother is right, M. Dufour," added Frederick. "You think because you have restored me to life that all is over between us. How ungrateful you are!"

"If mother and son have both declared war upon me, there is nothing left for me but to beat a retreat," exclaimed the doctor, drawing back a step or two.

"Oh, well, we will not take an unfair advantage; but only upon one condition, doctor. That is that you will dine with us."

"I left home with that very laudable intention," replied the doctor, quite seriously this time, "but just as I was leaving Pont Brillant, a woman stopped me and begged me to come at once to her son. I did so, but unfortunately his malady is of such a serious character that I shall not feel easy in mind if I do not see my patient again before seven o'clock."

"Of course I can make no protest under circumstances like these, my dear doctor," replied Madame Bastien, "and I am doubly grateful to you for granting us a few moments."

"And I have been looking forward to such a delightful evening," remarked the doctor. "It would have rounded out my day so well, for this morning I had a most delightful surprise."

"So some unexpected piece of good fortune has befallen you, my dear doctor. How glad I am!"

"Yes," replied the doctor; "for some time past I have been extremely uneasy about my best friend, an inveterate traveller, who had undertaken a dangerous journey through some of the least known portions of South America. Having heard nothing from him for more than eight months, I was beginning to feel very much alarmed, when this morning I received a letter from him written in London, where he had stopped for a few days on his return from Lima. He promises to come and spend some time with me, so you can judge how delighted I am, my dear Madame Bastien. He is like a brother to me, and not only has the best heart in the world, but is one of the most interesting as well as the most gifted men I know. What a pleasure it will be to have him all to myself!"

Here the doctor was interrupted by an elderly servant woman, who was leading a poorly clad child of seven or eight years by the hand, and who, from the threshold of the door where she was standing, called to the youth:

"It is six o'clock, M. Frederick."

"I'll see you again presently, mother," said the lad, kissing his young mother on the forehead.

Then, turning to the doctor, he added:

"I shall see you, too, doctor, before you go, shall I not?"

After which he hastily joined the child and old servant, and entered the house in company with them.

"Where is he going?" asked the doctor.

"To give his lesson. Didn't you see his scholar?"

"What scholar?"

"That child is the son of a day labourer who lives too far from Pont Brillant to be able to send his child to the village school, so Frederick is teaching the little fellow to read. He gives him two lessons a day, and I assure you that I am as well pleased with the teacher as with the pupil, doctor, for Frederick displays in his teaching a zeal, patience, and sweetness of disposition that delights me."

"It is certainly a very nice thing for him to do."

"We are obliged to do good in these small ways, you see, doctor," said Madame Bastien, with a rather sad smile. "You know with what rigid parsimony my son and I are treated in regard to money matters. Still, I should not complain. Thanks to this parsimony, Frederick devises all sorts of expedients. Some of them are, I assure you, very touching, and if I were not afraid of showing too much pride, I would tell you something that occurred last week."

"Go on, my dear Madame Bastien; surely you are not going to try to play the mock modest mother with me."

"No, I am not, so listen. Last Thursday Frederick and I walked over to Brevan heath —"

"Where they are clearing up some land. I noticed that fact as I passed there this morning."

"Yes, and you know that is pretty hard work, doctor."

"I should say that it was. Digging up roots and stumps that have been there three or four centuries."

"Well, while I was walking about with Frederick, we saw a poor, hungry-looking woman, with a little girl about ten years old, as pale and emaciated-looking as her mother, working there on the heath."

"A woman and a child of that age! Why, such work was entirely beyond their strength."

"You are right, doctor, and in spite of their courage, the poor creatures were making little or no headway. It was almost as much as the poor mother could do to lift the heavy spade, much less to force it into the hard earth, and when the root of a sapling at which she must have been digging a long time became partially uncovered, the woman and child, now using the spade as a lever, now digging in the ground with their hands, endeavoured to loosen the root, but in vain. Seeing how utterly futile their efforts were, the poor woman made an almost despairing movement, then threw herself down on the ground as if overcome with grief and fatigue, and covering her head with her tattered apron, she began to sob bitterly, while the child, kneeling beside her, also wept pitifully."

"Ah! such poverty as that!"

"I looked at my son. There were tears in his eyes as well as my own. I approached the poor woman and asked her how it happened that she was trying to do work so much beyond her strength, and she told me that her husband had contracted to clear up one quarter of the land, that he had become ill from overwork a couple of days before, that some of the work was still to be done, but that if the job was not finished by Saturday night, he would lose the fruit of nearly a fortnight's labour, for it was on these terms that her husband had undertaken the job, the work being urgent."

"Such contracts are frequently made, and unless the conditions are scrupulously complied with, the poor delinquents have to suffer, I am sorry to say. So the poor woman was trying to take her husband's place, I suppose."

"Yes, for it was a question of making or losing thirty-five francs upon which they were counting to pay the yearly rental of their miserable hovel, and purchase a little rye to live upon until the next harvest. After a few minutes' reflection Frederick said to the poor woman:

'I should think a good worker could finish the job in a couple of days, my good woman.' 'Yes, monsieur, but my husband is too ill to do it,' she replied. 'These poor people mustn't lose their thirty-five francs, mother,' Frederick said to me. 'They must have the money and we cannot afford to give it to them, so let me off from my studies on Friday and Saturday and I will finish the work for them. The poor woman won't run the risk of making herself ill. She can stay at home and nurse her husband, and Sunday she will get her money.'"

"Frederick is a noble boy!" exclaimed M. Dufour.

"Saturday evening just at dusk the task was completed," Madame Bastien continued. "Frederick performed the work with an ardour and cheerfulness which showed that it was a real pleasure to him. I stayed with him all during the two days. There was a big juniper-tree only a little way off, and I sat in the shade of that and read or embroidered while my son worked; and how he worked! such vigorous blows of the spade as he struck, the very earth trembled under my feet."

"I can well believe it; though he is rather slim, he is remarkably strong for one of his years."

"I took him water now and then, and to save time when lunch-time came, our old Marguerite brought us out something to eat. How happy we were eating out there on the heath under the shade of the juniper. Frederick enjoyed it immensely. Of course there was nothing so very wonderful about what he did, but what touched and pleased me was the promptness with which he made the resolution, and the perseverance and tenacity of will with which he carried it out."

"You are, indeed, the happiest of mothers," said the doctor with genuine emotion, pressing Marie's hands warmly, "and you have reason to be doubly happy, as this happiness is your own work."

"What else could you expect, doctor?" replied Madame Bastien, artlessly. "One lives for one's son you know."

"You most assuredly do," said the doctor, warmly, "and it is well for you that you do, as but for him —" but M. Dufour checked himself suddenly as if he had been about to say something that would be better left unsaid.

"You are right, my dear doctor, but now I think of it, didn't you say something about a proposition you were going to make to Frederick and me?"

"True, it is this: you know, or rather you do not know — for you hear very little of the neighbourhood gossip — that the Château de Pont Brillant has recently undergone a thorough renovation."

"I am so little *au courant* with the gossip of the neighbourhood, as you say, that this is the first intimation I have had of the fact. I even thought that the château was closed."

"It will not be much longer, for the young marquis is coming down to occupy it with his grandmother."

"This is the son of the M. de Pont Brillant who died about three years ago, I suppose. He must be very young."

"About Frederick's age. His father and mother are both dead, but his grandmother idolises him and she has gone to fabulous expense to refurnish the château, where she will hereafter spend eight or nine months of the year with her grandson. I was called to the castle a few days ago to attend M. le chef of the conservatories — for these great people do not say gardener; that would be entirely too common — and I was dazzled by the luxury and splendour that pervaded the immense establishment. There is a magnificent picture gallery, a palm house through which one could drive in a carriage, and superb statues in the gardens. Above all — but I

want to have the pleasure of surprising you, so I will only say that the place rivals any of the magnificent palaces described in the Arabian Nights. I feel sure that you and Frederick would enjoy seeing all the wonders of this fairy-land, and thanks to the consideration which M. le chef of the gardens and conservatories accords me, I can take you through the château to-morrow or the day after, but no later, as the young marquis is expected the day following that. What do you say to the proposition?"

"I accept it with pleasure, doctor. It will be a great treat to Frederick, whose wonder will be the greater as he has no idea that any such splendour exists in the world. So I thank you most heartily. We shall have a delightful day."

"Very well. When shall we go?"

"To-morrow, if it suits you."

"Perfectly; I will make my round very early in the morning, so I can get here by nine o'clock. It will take us only about half an hour to reach the château, as there is a short cut through the forest."

"And after we leave the château we can breakfast in the woods upon some fruit we will take with us," said Madame Bastien, gaily. "I will tell Marguerite to make one of those cakes you like so much, my dear doctor."

"I consent on condition that the cake is a big one," replied the doctor, laughing, "for however large it may be, Frederick and I are sure to make a big hole in it."

"You need have no fears on that score. You shall both have plenty of cake. But here comes Frederick; the lesson must be over. I will leave you the pleasure of surprising him."

"Oh, mother, how delightful!" exclaimed the lad, when M. Dufour had informed him of his project. "Thank you, thank you, my dear doctor, for

having planned this charming journey into fairy-land."

The doctor was punctual the next day, and he and Madame Bastien and her son started through the forest for the Château de Pont Brillant in all the fresh glory of a superb summer morning.

CHAPTER III.

THE approach to the castle was through a broad avenue nearly half a mile long, bordered by a double row of gigantic elms probably four centuries old. A broad esplanade, ornamented with enormous orange-trees in boxes, and bordered with a massive stone balustrade extended across the entire front of the château, afforded a superb view of the surrounding country, and served as a court of honour for the castle, which was a *chef d'œuvre* of the renaissance type of architecture, with big cylindrical cone-roofed towers with highly decorated dormer windows, and tall chimneys that strongly reminded the beholder of the grand yet fairy-like ensemble of the famous Château de Chambord.

Frederick and his mother had never seen this imposing structure before except at a distance, and on reaching the middle of the broad esplanade they both paused, struck with admiration as they viewed all these marvellous details and the rich carvings and traceries of stone, the existence of which they had never even suspected before, while the good doctor, as pleased as if the château had belonged to him, rubbed his hands joyfully, as he complacently exclaimed:

"Oh, the outside is nothing; just wait until you have entered this enchanted palace."

"Oh, mother," cried Frederick, "look at that colonnade at the base of the main tower; how light and airy it is!"

"And those balconies," responded his mother, "one would almost think they were made of lace! And the

ornamentations on those window-caps, how elaborate yet how delicate they are."

"I declare we sha'n't get away from the château before to-morrow if we waste so much time admiring the walls," protested the doctor.

"M. Dufour is right. Come, Frederick," said Marie, taking her son's arm.

"And those buildings which look like another château connected with the main buildings by circular wings, what are they?" asked the youth, turning to the doctor.

"The stables and servants' quarters, my boy."

"Stables!" exclaimed Madame Bastien. "Impossible! You must be mistaken, my dear doctor."

"What! you have no more confidence than that in your cicerone!" exclaimed the doctor. "You will find that I am right, madame. There are so many stalls in the stable that when the great-grandfather, or great-great-grandfather of the present marquis lived here, he kept a regiment of cavalry here, horses and men at his own expense, just for the pleasure of seeing them go through their manœuvres every morning before breakfast on the esplanade. It seemed to give the worthy man an appetite."

"It was a whim worthy of a great soldier like him," said Marie. "You recollect with what interest we read the history of his Italian campaign last winter, do you not, Frederick?"

"I should think I did remember," exclaimed Frederick, enthusiastically. "Next to Charles XII., the Maréchal de Pont Brillant is my favourite hero."

Meanwhile the three visitors had crossed the esplanade, and Madame Bastien, seeing M. Dufour turn to the right instead of keeping straight on toward the front of the building, remarked:

"But, doctor, it seems to me that the heavily carved door in front of us must lead into the inner courtyard."

"So it does; the grand personages enter by that door, but plebeians, like ourselves, are lucky to get in the back way," replied the doctor, laughing. "I should like to see M. le Suisse take the trouble to open that armorial door for us."

"I ask your pardon for my absurd pretensions," said Madame Bastien, gaily, while Frederick, making a sort of comical salute to the superb entrance, said, laughingly:

"Ah, manorial doorway, we are only too well aware that you were not made for us!"

M. Dufour, having rung at the servants' entrance and asked to see M. Dutilleul, head superintendent of the gardens and conservatories, the party was admitted into the courtyard. To reach M. Dutilleul's house, it was necessary to cross one of the stable-yards. About thirty riding, hunting, and carriage horses belonging to the young marquis had arrived the evening before, and a number of English grooms and hostlers were bustling in and out of the stables, some washing carriages, others polishing bits and stirrups until they shone like burnished silver, all under the vigilant eye of the chef of the stables, an elderly Englishman, who, with a cigar between his lips, was presiding over this work with truly British phlegm, cane in hand.

Suddenly, pointing to a massive gate that had just turned slowly upon its hinges, the doctor exclaimed:

"See, there come some more horses! A whole regiment of them. One would think we were living in the old marshal's time, Madame Bastien."

About twenty-five more horses, of different ages and sizes, all concealed in blankets bearing the marquis's coat-of-arms, some ridden, some led, began to file through the archway. Their dusty legs and housings indicated that they had just made a long journey. A handsome calèche, drawn by two spirited horses, ended the procession. A handsomely dressed young man alighted from it, and

gave some order in English to one of the grooms, who listened, cap in hand.

"Do the horses that just came also belong to M. le marquis, my friend?" the doctor inquired of a passing servant.

"Yes, they are M. le marquis's racers and brood mares."

"And the gentleman that just got out of the carriage?"

"Is M. Newman, M. le marquis's trainer."

As the three visitors walked on toward the conservatories, they passed a long passage in the basement. This passage evidently led to the kitchens, for eight or ten cooks and scullions were engaged in unpacking several hogsheads filled with copper cooking utensils so prodigious in size that they seemed to have been made for Gargantua himself. The visitors also viewed, with ever increasing astonishment, the incredible number of servants of every kind.

"Well, Madame Bastien, if any one should tell this young marquis that you and I and a host of other people had only one or two servants to wait on us, and yet were tolerably well served, he would probably laugh in his face," remarked M. Dufour.

"So much pomp and luxury bewilders me," replied Marie. "Why, there is a little town right here in the château, and think of all those horses! You will not want for models after this, Frederick. You are so fond of drawing horses, but up to this time you have had only our venerable cart-horse for a model."

"Really, mother, I had no idea that any one save the king, perhaps, was rich enough to have such an immense number of servants and horses," replied Frederick. "Great Heavens! what a host of people and animals to be devoted to the service or pleasure of a single person!"

The words were uttered in an ironical tone, but Madame

Bastien did not notice the fact, being so deeply interested as well as amused by what she saw going on around her; nor had she noticed that her son's features had contracted slightly several times, as if under the influence of some disagreeable impression.

The fact is, though Frederick was not a particularly close observer, he had been struck with the lack of respect shown to his mother and the doctor by this crowd of noisy and busy domestics; some had jostled the visitors as they passed, others had rudely obstructed the way, others, surprised at Marie Bastien's rare beauty, had stared at her with bold, almost insulting curiosity, facts which the young mother in her unconsciousness had entirely failed to notice.

Not so with her son, however, and seeing that his mother, the doctor, and himself were thus treated simply because they had owed their admission to a servant, and sought admission at the servants' entrance, Frederick's admiration became tinged with a slight bitterness, the bitterness that had caused his ironical comment on the number of persons and horses devoted to the pleasure and service of a single individual.

The sight of the magnificent gardens through which they were obliged to pass to reach the greenhouses soon made the lad forget his bitterness. The gardeners were no less numerous than the subordinates in the various other departments, and by inquiring for M. le chef of the gardens and conservatories, the visitors finally ascertained that this important personage was in the main conservatory.

This building, which was circular in form, was two hundred feet in diameter, with a conical roof, the apex of which rose to a height of forty feet. This gigantic conservatory, constructed of iron, with remarkable boldness yet lightness of design, was filled with the most superb exotics. Banana-trees of all sizes and kinds, from the dwarf musa to the paradisiaca, rose to a height of

thirty feet, with leaves many of them two yards in length. Here the green fans of the date-palm mingled with the tall stems of the sugar-cane and bamboos, while the clear water in a huge marble basin in the centre of the conservatory reflected all sorts of aquatic plants, among them great arums from India, with enormous round leaves, tall cyperus with their waving plumes, and the lotus of the Nile, with its immense azure flowers so intoxicating in their fragrance. A marvellous variety of vegetation of every shape and kind and colour had been collected here, from the pale mottled green of the begonia, to the richest hues of the maranta, with its wonderful leaves of green velvet underneath and purple satin on top; tall ficus side by side with ferns so delicate that the lace-like foliage seemed to be supported with thin strands of violet silk; here a strelitzia, with a flower that looked like a bird with orange wings and a lapis lazuli crest, vied in splendour with the astrapea, with its enormous cerise pompon, flecked with gold, while in many places the immense leaves of the banana-trees formed a natural arch which so effectually concealed the glass roof of the rotunda from view that one might have supposed oneself in a tropical forest.

Marie Bastien and Frederick interchanged exclamations of surprise and admiration at every step.

"Ah, Frederick, how delightful it is to see and touch these banana-trees and date-palms, we have read of so often in books of travel," cried Marie.

"Mother, mother, here is the coffee-tree," exclaimed Frederick, in his turn, "and there, that plant with such thick leaves, climbing up that column, is the vanilla."

"Frederick, look at those immense latania leaves. It is easy to understand now that in India five or six leaves are enough to cover a cabin."

"And mother, look, there is the beautiful passion-vine Captain Cook speaks of. I recognised it at once by the flowers; they look like little openwork china baskets,

and yet you and I used to accuse the poor captain of inventing impossible flowers."

"M. de Pont Brillant must spend most of his time in this enchanted garden when he is at home," Marie Bastien remarked to the superintendent.

"M. le marquis is like the late marquis, his father," replied the gardener. "He doesn't care much for flowers. He prefers the stable and kennels."

Madame Bastien and her son gazed at each other in amazement.

"Then, why does he have these magnificent conservatories, monsieur?" inquired the young woman, ingenuously.

"Because every castle must have its conservatories, madame," replied the functionary, proudly. "It is a luxury every self-respecting nobleman owes to himself."

"So it is purely a matter of self-respect," Marie remarked to her son in a whispered aside. "But all jesting aside, in winter, when the days are so short, and the snow is flying, what delightful hours one could spend here, safe from the frost."

At last the doctor was obliged to interfere.

"My dear madame, we shall have to spend at least a couple of days in the conservatory, at this rate," he exclaimed, laughing.

"That is true, doctor," replied Madame Bastien, smiling; then, with a sigh of regret, she added: "Come, let us leave the tropics, — for some other part of the world, I suppose, as you told me this was a land of wonders, M. Dufour."

"You thought I was jesting. Well, you shall see. If you are very good, I will now take you to China."

"To China?"

"Certainly, and after remaining there a quarter of an hour we will make a little excursion to Switzerland."

"And what then, doctor?"

"Well, when there are no more foreign lands to visit,

we will inspect all the different eras from the Gothic age down to the days of Louis the Fifteenth, and all in an hour's time."

"Nothing can surprise me now, doctor," replied Madame Bastien, "for I know for a certainty, now, that we are in fairy-land. Come, Frederick."

And the visitors followed M. le chef of the gardens and conservatories, who smiled rather superciliously at the plebeian amazement of M. Dufour's friends. Though the wonders of the conservatory had made Frederick forget his bitter feelings for a time, the lad followed his mother with a less buoyant step than usual, for the bitterness returned as he thought of the young Marquis de Pont Brillant's indifference to the beauties that would have given such joy and delight and congenial occupation to the many persons capable of appreciating the treasures collected here at such prodigious expense.

CHAPTER IV.

On leaving the immense rotunda which formed the principal conservatory, the head gardener conducted the visitors into other hothouses built on either side of the main structure. One of these, used as a pinery, led to another conservatory devoted entirely to orchids, and, in spite of the humidity and stifling heat, the doctor had considerable difficulty in tearing Marie Bastien and her son away from the spot, so great was their wonder and astonishment at the sight of these beautiful but almost fantastic flowers, some strongly resembling huge butterflies in shape and colouring, others, winged insects of the most fantastic appearance. Here M. Dutilleul's domain ended, but he was kind enough to express a a willingness to conduct our friends through the orangery and grapery.

"I promised you China," the doctor said to his friends, "and here we are in China."

In fact, as they left the orchid house, they found themselves in a gallery, with columns painted a bright green and scarlet, and paved with porcelain blocks which were continued up the low wall that served as a support for the base of the columns. Between these columns stood immense blue, white, and gold vases, containing camellias, peonies, azaleas, and lemon-trees. This gallery, which was enclosed with glass in winter, led to a small Chinese house which formed the centre of a large winter-garden.

The construction of this house, which had cost infinite care and an immense outlay of money, dated back to the

middle of the eighteenth century, when the rage for everything Chinese was at its height, as the famous Chanteloup pagoda, a very tall building, constructed entirely of china, testifies.

The Chinese house at Pont Brillant was no whit inferior to M. de Choiseul's famous "folly." The arrangement of this dwelling, which consisted of several rooms, the hangings, furniture, ornaments, and household utensils, were all strictly authentic, and to complete the illusion, two wonderful wax figures, life-size, stood on either side of the drawing-room door, as if to welcome their visitors, to whom they ever and anon bowed, thanks to some internal mechanism that made them move their eyes from side to side, and alternately raise and incline their heads. The choicest and most curious specimens of lacquer work, richly embroidered stuffs, furniture, china, gold and silver articles, and ivory carvings had been collected in this sort of museum.

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Madame Bastien, examining all these treasures with great curiosity and interest. "See, Frederick, here is a living book in which one can study the customs, habits, and history of this singular country, for here is also a collection of medals, coins, drawings, and manuscripts."

"Say, mother!" exclaimed Frederick, "how pleasantly and profitably one could spend the long winter evenings here in reading about China, and comparing, or rather verifying the descriptions in the book with nature, so to speak."

"M. de Pont Brillant must often visit this curious and interesting pavilion, I am sure," said Marie, turning to M. Dutilleul.

"M. le marquis has never been a victim to the Chinese craze, madame," was the reply. "He likes hunting much better. It was his great-grandfather who had this house built, because it was the fashion at that time, that is all."

Marie could not help shrugging her shoulders the least bit in the world, and exchanging a half-smile with her son, who seemed to become more and more thoughtful as he followed his mother, to whom the doctor had offered his arm to conduct her along a winding path leading from the winter-garden to a rocky grotto, lighted by large, lens-shaped pieces of blue glass inserted in the rocks, which imparted to this subterranean chamber, ornamented with beautiful sea-shells and coral, a pale light similar to that which pervades the depths of the ocean.

"We are going to the home of the water-nymphs now, are we not?" asked Madame Bastien, gaily, as she began the descent. "Isn't some mermaid coming to welcome us upon the threshold of her watery empire?"

"Nothing of the kind," replied the doctor. "This subterranean passage, carpeted, as you see, and always kept warm during the winter, leads to the château; for you must have noticed that all the different buildings we have seen are connected by covered passages, so in winter one can go from one to the other without fearing rain or cold."

In fact, this grotto was connected, by a spiral staircase, with the end of a long gallery called the Guards' Hall, and which in years gone by had probably served for that purpose. Ten windows of stained glass, with the Pont Brillant coat-of-arms emblazoned upon them, lighted this immense room finished in richly carved oak, with a sky ceiling divided by heavy groins of carved oak.

Ten figures in complete suits of armour, helmet on head, visor down, halberd in hand, sword at side, were ranged in line on the other side of the gallery, facing, and directly opposite the ten windows, where the reflection from the stained glass cast prismatic lights upon the steel armour, making it stand out in vivid relief against the dark woodwork.

In the middle of this hall, upon a pedestal, was a knight, also in a complete suit of armour, mounted upon a battle-steed hewn out of wood, which was entirely hidden by its steel bards and long, richly emblazoned trappings. The knight's armour, which was heavily embossed with gold, was a marvel of the goldsmith's art and of elaborate ornamentation, and M. le chef of the conservatories, pausing in front of the figure, said with a certain amount of family pride:

"This suit of armour was worn by Raoul IV., Sire de Pont Brillant, during the First Crusade, which proves beyond a doubt that the nobility of M. le marquis is of no recent date."

Just then an elderly man, dressed in black, having opened one of the massive doors of the hall, M. Dutilleul remarked to Doctor Dufour:

"Ah, doctor, here is M. Legris, the keeper of the silver. He is a friend of mine. I will ask him to show you about. He will prove a much better guide than I should be."

And advancing toward the old man, M. Dutilleul said:

"My dear Legris, here are some friends of mine who would like to see the castle. I am going to hand them over to you, and in return, whenever any of your acquaintances wish to inspect the hothouses — "

"Our friends' friends are our friends, Dutilleul," replied the keeper of the silver, rather peremptorily; then, with a rather familiar gesture, he motioned the visitors to follow him into the apartments which a large corps of servants had just finished putting in order.

It would take entirely too long to enumerate all the splendid adornments of this castle, or rather, palace, from the library, which many a large town might have envied, to a superb picture gallery, containing many of the finest specimens of both the old and the modern

school of art, upon which the visitors could only cast a hasty glance, for, in spite of the obliging promise made to M. Dutilleul, the keeper of the castle silver seemed rather impatient to get rid of his charges.

The first floor, as M. Dufour had said, consisted of an extensive suite of apartments, each of which might have served as an illustration of some particular epoch in interior decoration between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries; in short, it was a veritable museum, though of an essentially private character, by reason of the many family portraits and the valuable relics of every sort and kind which had belonged to different members of this great and ancient house.

In one of the wings on the second floor were the apartments of the dowager Marquise de Pont Brillant. In spite of that lady's advanced age, these rooms had been newly fitted up in the daintiest, most coquettish style imaginable. There was a profusion of lace and gilding and costly brocades, as well as of elaborately carved rosewood furniture, and superb ornaments of Sevres and Dresden china. The bedchamber, hung with pink and white brocade, with a canopied bedstead decorated with big bunches of white ostrich feathers, was especially charming. The dressing-room was really a ravishing boudoir hung with pale blue satin, studded with marguerites. In the middle of this room, furnished in gilded rosewood, like the adjoining bedchamber, was a magnificent dressing-table, draped with costly lace caught back with knots of ribbon, and covered with toilet articles, some of wrought gold, others of sky-blue Sevres.

Our three friends had just entered this apartment when a haughty, arrogant-looking man appeared in the doorway. This personage, who wore a bit of red ribbon in the buttonhole of his long frock coat, was nothing more or less than my lord steward of the castle and surrounding domain.

On seeing the three strangers, this high and mighty personage frowned with an intensely surprised and displeased air.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, imperiously, of his subordinate, M. Legris. "Why are you not attending to your silver? Who are these people?"

On hearing these discourteous words, Madame Bastien turned scarlet with confusion, the little doctor straightened himself up to his full height, and Frederick rashly muttered, under his breath, "Insolent creature!" as he stepped a little closer to his mother.

Madame Bastien gave her son's hand a warning pressure, as she slightly shrugged her shoulder as if to show her disdain.

"They are some friends of Dutilleul's, M. Desmazures," replied M. Legris, humbly. "He asked me to take them through the chateau, and — and I thought —"

"Why, this is outrageous!" exclaimed the steward, interrupting him. "I never heard of such assurance. Such a thing wouldn't be allowed in the house of a tradesman on the Rue St. Denis! The idea of taking the first person that comes along into the apartments of madame la marquise, in this fashion."

"Monsieur," said Doctor Dufour, firmly, walking toward the steward, "Madame Bastien, her son, and myself, who am M. Dutilleul's physician, thought we were committing no indiscretion — nor were we — in accepting an offer to show us the château. I have visited several royal residences, monsieur, and think it well to inform you that I have always been politely treated by the person in charge of them."

"That is very possible, monsieur," answered the steward, dryly, "but you doubtless applied to some person who was authorised to give it, for permission to visit these royal residences. You should have addressed a written application to me, the steward, and the sole master here in M. le marquis's absence."

"We must beg monsieur to kindly pardon our ignorance of these formalities," said Madame Bastien, with a mocking smile, as if to show her son how little she minded this pompous functionary's discourtesy.

She took Frederick's arm as she spoke.

"If I had been more familiar with the usages of monsieur's administration," added the doctor, with a sarcastic smile, "monsieur would have received a respectful request that in his omnipotent goodness he would kindly grant us permission to inspect the château."

"Is that intended as a jest, monsieur?" demanded the steward, angrily.

"Somewhat, monsieur," replied the little doctor.

The irascible functionary took a step forward.

"In order not to close this conversation with a jest, monsieur," interposed Madame Bastien, turning to the steward, "permit me to say in all seriousness, monsieur, that I have often read that the house of any great nobleman could always be recognised by the urbanity of his hirelings."

"Well, madame?"

"Well, monsieur, it seems to me that you must desire to prove this rule — by the exception."

It is impossible to describe the perfect dignity with which Marie Bastien gave this well-deserved lesson to the arrogant hireling, who bit his lip with rage, unable to utter a word, whereupon Marie, taking the doctor's arm, gaily remarked to her companions:

"You should not manifest so much surprise. Don't you know that one often meets with evil spirits in enchanted countries? It is a satisfaction to know that they are nearly always of an inferior order. Let us hasten away with recollections of these wonders which the evil genius cannot spoil."

A few minutes afterward Madame Bastien, Frederick, and the doctor left the castle. Marie, out of

consideration for the doctor, who seemed greatly pained at this contretemps, as well as by reason of her natural good nature, bore her share of their mutual discomfiture cheerfully, even gaily, and laughed not a little at the absurdly important airs the steward had given himself. M. Dufour, who cared nothing about the man's rudeness except so far as it might affect Madame Bastien, soon recovered his natural good spirits when he saw how little importance his fair companion seemed to attach to the affair.

A quarter of an hour afterward the three friends were sitting in the shade of a clump of gigantic oaks, enjoying their lunch. Frederick, though he manifested some little constraint of manner, seemed to share his companions' high spirits, but Marie, too clear-sighted not to notice that her son was not exactly himself, fancied she could divine the cause of his preoccupation, and teased him a little about the importance he seemed to attach to the steward's impertinence.

"Come, come, my handsome Cid, my valiant cavalier," she said, gaily, "keep your anger and your trusty blade for an adversary worthy of you. The doctor and I both gave the ill-bred fellow a good lesson. Now let us think only of ending the day as pleasantly as possible, and of the pleasure it will give us for weeks to come to talk of the treasures of every kind that we have seen."

Then, with a laugh, the young mother added:

"Say, Frederick, don't forget to-morrow morning to tell old Andre, M. le chef of our open-air garden, not to forget to bring us a bouquet of lilies of the valley and violets."

"Yes, mother," answered Frederick, smiling.

"And I wish you would also have the goodness to tell M. le chef of our stables to harness our venerable white horse in the afternoon, as we must go to the village to do some shopping."

"And I, madame," exclaimed the doctor, with his

mouth full of cake, "take great pleasure in assuring you, or, rather, I should say, in proving to you that your old Marguerite, the chef of your culinary department, is a none-such, so far as cake-making is concerned, — for this cake is certainly — "

But the good doctor did not finish the sentence, as he choked badly in his effort to talk and eat at the same time.

So with gay jests and laughter the meal went on, and Frederick tried his best to share his companions' hilarity; but the lad's mirth was constrained, he was conscious of a strange and increasing feeling of annoyance. As certain vague and inexplicable symptoms presage the invasion of a still latent malady, so certain vague and inexplicable sentiments seemed to be germinating in Frederick's heart. The nature of these sentiments, though as yet not very clearly defined, caused him a feeling of instinctive shame, so much so, in fact, that he, who had always been so confiding with his mother, now dreaded her penetration for the first time in his life, and deliberately set to work to deceive her by feigning all the rest of the day a gaiety that he was far from feeling.

CHAPTER V.

SEVERAL days had passed since the visit to the Château de Pont Brillant. Frederick had never left his mother's house to visit the homes of persons of an even humbler station than his own, so the impression which the sight of the splendours and the almost royal luxury that pervaded it had made upon him had suffered no diminution. When, on the following morning, the lad awoke in his own little room, it seemed bare and comfortless to him, and when he afterward went as usual to bid his mother good morning, he involuntarily compared the costly elegance of the Marquise de Pont Brillant's apartments with the poverty of his mother's surroundings, and experienced a strange sinking of heart.

An unlucky chance deepened this impression. When Frederick entered his mother's room, the young woman, in all the freshness of her marvellous beauty, was arranging her beautiful brown hair in front of a cheap painted toilet-table covered with oilcloth and surmounted by a tiny glass with a black frame.

Frederick, remembering the rich lace and satin and gold that adorned the dressing-room of the dowager marquise, experienced for the first time in his life a bitter pang of envy, as he said to himself:

"Doesn't that elegant, luxurious boudoir I saw at the castle seem much better suited to a beautiful and charming woman like my mother than to a wrinkled octogenarian who, in her ridiculous vanity, wants to admire her withered face in mirrors wreathed with lace and ribbons!"

Already strangely depressed in spirits, Frederick went out into the garden. The morning was perfect, and the dew on the petals of the flowers glistened like pearls in the bright July sunshine. Heretofore the lad, like his mother, had often gone into ecstasies over the beauty, freshness, and exquisite perfume of some specially fine rose; the snowy petals of the Easter flowers, the velvety petals of the pansies, and the exquisite delicacy of the acacia had always excited his lively admiration, but now he had only careless, almost disdainful looks for these simple flowers, as he thought of the rare and magnificent tropical plants that filled the spacious conservatories of the château. The grove of venerable oaks, enlivened by the gay warbling of birds that seemed to be replying to the soft murmur of the little waterfall, was also viewed with disdain. How insignificant these things appeared in comparison with the magnificent grounds of the château, adorned with rare statues and superb fountains peopled with bronze naiads and Tritons sending great jets of water as high as the tree-tops.

Absorbed in thoughts like these, Frederick walked slowly on until he reached the edge of the grove. There he paused and gazed mechanically around him, then gave a sudden start, and turned abruptly, as he perceived in the distance the château standing out clearly against the horizon in the bright light of the rising sun. At the sight of it Frederick hastily retreated into the shadows of the grove, but, alas! though he could thus close his bodily eyes to this resplendent vision, the lad's too faithful memory kept the wonders that had so impressed him continually before his mental vision, inducing comparisons which poisoned the simple pleasures of the past, until now so full of charm.

As he passed the open door of the stable, a superannuated farm horse which was sometimes harnessed to a sort of chaise, Madame Bastien's only equipage, whinnied

in his stall for the crusts of bread that he had been in the habit of receiving every morning from his young master.

Frederick had forgotten to bring the crusts that morning, and to atone for his forgetfulness, he tore up a big handful of fresh grass and offered it to his faithful old friend, but suddenly remembering the magnificent blooded horses he had seen at the castle, he smiled bitterly and turned brusquely away from the old horse, who, with the grass still between his teeth, watched his young master for a long time with an expression of almost human intelligence.

Soon afterward an old and infirm woman, to whom Frederick, having no money, gave bread and fruit every week, came to the house as usual.

"Here, my good mother," he said, as he presented his usual offering, "I wish I could do more for you, but my mother and I have no money."

"You are very kind all the same, M. Bastien," replied the woman, "but I shall not be obliged to ask anything of you much longer."

"Why not?"

"Why, you see, M. Bastien, that M. le marquis is coming to live at the castle, and these great noblemen are very generous with their money, and I hope to get my share. Your servant, M. Bastien."

Frederick blushed for the first time at the humble gift he had made heretofore with such pleasure and contentment, so shortly afterward, when another beggar accosted him, he said:

"You would only sneer at what I can give you. Apply to M. le marquis. He should act as a benefactor to the entire neighbourhood. He is so rich!"

That such bitter envy should have taken such sudden but absolute possession of Frederick's heart seems strange indeed to those who know his past, yet this apparent anomaly can be easily explained.

Madame Bastien's son had been reared in an exceedingly modest home, but his mother's taste and refinement had imbued even these plain surroundings with an air of elegance and distinction, and, thanks to a thousand nothings, the ensemble had been charming.

The love of beauty and elegance thus developed rendered Frederick peculiarly susceptible to the charm of the wonders he had seen at the castle, and the longing to possess them naturally corresponded with his appreciation and admiration.

If, on the contrary, Frederick's life had been spent amid rough and coarse surroundings, he would have been more amazed than surprised at the treasures which the château contained, and, ignorant of the refined enjoyment that could be derived from them, he would have been much less likely to envy the fortunate possessor of them.

Madame Bastien soon perceived the change that was gradually taking place in her son, and that manifested itself in frequent fits of melancholy. The humble home no longer resounded with peals of laughter as in days gone by. When his studies were over, Frederick picked up a book and read during the entire recreation hour, but more than once Madame Bastien noticed that her son's eyes remained fixed upon the same page for a quarter of an hour.

Her anxiety increasing, Madame Bastien remarked to her son: "My son, you seem so grave and taciturn and preoccupied, you are not nearly as lively as formerly."

"True, mother," replied Frederick, forcing a smile, "I am sometimes surprised myself at the more serious turn my mind is taking. Still, it is not at all astonishing. I am no longer a child. It is quite time for me to be getting sensible."

Frederick had never lied before, but he was lying now. Up to this time he had always confessed his faults to his mother. She had been the confidant of his every

thought, but the mere idea of confessing or of allowing her to discover the bitter feelings which his visit to the Château de Pont Brillant had excited in his breast filled him with shame and dismay. In fact, he would rather have died than confess that he was enduring the torments of envy; so, placed upon his guard by Madame Bastien's lively solicitude, he devoted all his powers of mind and strength of will to conceal the wound that was beginning to rankle in his soul, but it is almost certain that his attempts to deceive his mother's tender sagacity would have proved futile had that mother not been at the same time reassured and deceived by Doctor Dufour.

"Don't be alarmed," the physician said to her when she, in all sincerity, consulted him on the subject of her fears. "At the time of puberty, an entire change often takes place in a youth's character. The gayest and most demonstrative often become the most gloomy and taciturn. They experience the most unreasonable melancholy, the most acute anxiety. They give way to fits of profound depression, and feel an intense longing for solitude. So do not be alarmed, and above all give no sign of having noticed this change in your son. This almost inevitable crisis will be over in a few months, and you will then see Frederick himself again. He will have a different voice, that is all."

Doctor Dufour's mistake was the more excusable as the symptoms which so alarmed Madame Bastien strongly resembled those which are often noticed in youths at that age; so Madame Bastien accepted this explanation, as she could not divine the real cause of this change in Frederick.

This change had not manifested itself immediately after the visit to the château. It had, on the contrary, taken place gradually, almost imperceptibly, in fact, so that more than a month had elapsed before Madame Bastien really began to feel uneasy, hence it did not seem at all probable that there could be any connection

between the visit to the château and Frederick's melancholy.

Besides, how could Madame Bastien suppose that this youth reared by her — a youth who had always seemed of so noble and generous a character — could know envy?

So, reassured by Doctor Dufour, Madame Bastien, though she watched the different phases of her son's condition, forced herself to conceal the sadness she often felt on seeing him so changed, and awaited his recovery with resignation.

At first Frederick had tried to find some diversion in study, but soon study became impossible; his mind was elsewhere. Then he said to himself:

"Whatever I may learn, whatever I may know, I shall never be anything but Frederick Bastien, a sort of half peasant, doomed to a life of obscurity, while that young marquis, without ever having done anything to deserve it, enjoys all the glory of a name which has been illustrious for ages."

Then, as all the feudal relics at Pont Brillant, those galleries of paintings, those family portraits, those gorgeous escutcheons, recurred to Frederick's mind, for the first time in his life the poor boy felt deeply humiliated by the obscurity of his birth, and overcome with discouragement, said to himself:

"This young marquis, already weary of the magnificence by which he is surrounded, indifferent to the treasures of which even a thousandth part would make my mother and me and a host of others so happy. Why, and by what right does he possess all this magnificence? Has he acquired these blessings by his toil? No.. To enjoy all this, he has only taken the trouble to be born. Why should he have everything and others nothing?"

CHAPTER VI.

THE first period of envy that Frederick experienced was of a passive, the second of an active character.

It is impossible to describe what he suffered then, especially as this feeling, concealed, concentrated as it were in the lowest depths of his soul, had no outlet, and was constantly stimulated by the sight of the castle, which seemed to meet his gaze at every turn, dominating as it did the whole country roundabout. The more Frederick realised the alarming progress of his malady, the more strenuously he endeavoured to hide it from his mother, telling himself in his gloom and despair that such weakness deserved scorn and contempt, and that not even a mother could condone it.

All mental maladies react upon the physical system. Frederick's health gradually gave way. He could not sleep, and he, who had formerly been so energetic and active, seemed to dread the slightest exertion. In fact, the pressing and tender solicitations of his mother could alone arouse him from his apathy or his gloomy reveries.

Poor Marie! How intensely she, too, suffered, but in silence, endeavouring to maintain a cheerful manner all the while for fear of alarming her son about himself, and waiting with mingled anxiety and hope the end of this crisis in her son's life.

But alas! how long and painful this waiting seemed. What a change! What a contrast between this gloomy, listless, taciturn life, and the bright, busy, happy existence she and her son had previously led!

ENVY.

One day early in October Madame Bastien and her son were together in the room that served both as parlour and study. Frederick, seated at the table, with his head supported on his left hand, was writing slowly and listlessly in a large exercise book.

Madame Bastien, seated only a little distance from him, was apparently occupied with some embroidery, but in reality she was holding her needle suspended in the air, ready to resume her work at her son's slightest movement, while she furtively watched him.

Tears she could hardly restrain filled her eyes as she noted the terrible change in her son's appearance, and remembered that only a comparatively short while ago the hours spent in study at this same table had been such pleasant, happy hours both for Frederick and herself, and compared the zeal and enthusiasm which her son had then displayed in his work with the listlessness and indifference she now remarked in him, for she soon saw his pen slip from his fingers, while his countenance displayed an intense ennui and lassitude.

At last the lad, only half smothering a heavy sigh, buried his face in his hands and remained in this attitude several moments. His mother did not lose sight of him for an instant, but what was her surprise on seeing her son suddenly lift his head, and with eyes flashing and a faint colour tinging his cheeks, while a sardonic smile curved his lips, suddenly seize his pen again, and begin writing with feverish rapidity.

The youth was transfigured. So inert, despondent, and lethargic a moment before, he now seemed full to overflowing of life and animation. One could see that his thoughts, too, flowed much more rapidly than his pen could trace them on the paper, by an occasional impatient movement of the body or the quick tapping of his foot upon the floor.

A few words of explanation are necessary here.

For some time Frederick had complained to his

mother of his distaste, or rather his incapacity, for any regular work, though occasionally, in compliance with Madame Bastien's wishes as well as in the hope of diverting his mind, he had attempted something in the way either of study or an essay on some given subject, but almost invariably he had appealed to his formerly fertile imagination in vain.

"I can't imagine what is the matter with me," he would murmur, despondently. "My mind seems to be enveloped in a sort of haze. Forgive me, mother, it is not my fault."

And Madame Bastien found a thousand reasons to excuse and console him.

So on this occasion the young mother fully expected to see Frederick soon abandon his work. What was her astonishment, consequently, to see him for the first time write on and on with increasing interest and eagerness.

In this return to former habits Madame Bastien fancied she could detect the first sign of the end of this critical period in the life of her son. Doubtless his mind was beginning to emerge from the sort of haze which had so long obscured it, and, eager to satisfy herself of the fact, Madame Bastien rose, and noiselessly approaching her son on tiptoe, she placed her hands on his shoulders and leaned over to read what he had written.

In his surprise the youth gave a violent start, then, hastily closing his exercise book, turned an impatient, almost angry face, toward his mother and exclaimed:

"You had no right to do that, mother."

Then reopening his book, he tore out the pages he had just written, crumpled them up in his hands, and threw them into the fire that was blazing on the hearth, where they were soon burnt to ashes.

Madame Bastien, overwhelmed with astonishment, stood for a moment speechless and motionless; then,

comparing this rudeness on the part of her son with the delightful camaraderie which had formerly existed between them, she burst into tears.

It was the first time her son had ever wounded her feelings. Seeing his mother's tears, Frederick, in an agony of remorse, threw his arms around his mother's neck and covered her face with tears and kisses, exclaiming in a voice broken by sobs:

"Oh, forgive me, mother, forgive me!"

On hearing this repentant cry, Madame Bastien reproached herself for her tears. She even reproached herself for the painful impression the incident had made upon her, for was it not due to Frederick's unfortunate condition? so, covering her son's face with passionate kisses, she, in her turn, implored his forgiveness.

"My poor child, you are not well," she exclaimed, tenderly, "and your suffering renders you nervous and irritable. I was very foolish to attach any importance to a slight show of impatience for which you were hardly accountable."

"No, oh, no, mother, I swear it."

"Nonsense! my child, I believe you. As if I could doubt you, my dear Frederick."

"I tore out the pages, mother," continued the lad with no little embarrassment, for he was telling a falsehood, "I tore out the pages because I was not satisfied with what I had written. It was the worst thing I have written since this — this sort of — of despondency seized me."

"And I, seeing you write with so much apparent animation for the first time in weeks, felt so pleased that I could not resist the temptation to see what you had written. But let us say no more about that, my dear Frederick, though I feel almost sure that you have been too severe a critic."

"No, mother, I assure you —"

"Oh, well, I will take your word for it, and now as

you are not in the mood for work, suppose we go out for a little walk."

"It is so cloudy, mother, besides, I don't feel as if I had energy enough to take a single step."

"It is this dangerous languor that I am so anxious to have you fight against and overcome if possible. Come, my dear lazybones, come out and row me about the lake in your boat. The exercise will do you good."

"I don't feel equal to it, really, mother."

"Well, you haven't heard, I think, that André said he saw a big flock of plover this morning. Take your gun, and we will go over to Sablonnière heath. You will enjoy it and so shall I. You are such a good shot, it is a pleasure to see you handle a gun."

"I don't take any pleasure in hunting now."

"Yet you used to be so fond of it."

"I don't care for anything now," replied Frederick, almost involuntarily, in a tone of intense bitterness.

Again the young mother felt the tears spring to her eyes, and Frederick, seeing his mother's distress, exclaimed:

"I love you always, mother, you know that."

"Oh, yes, I know that, but you have no idea how despondently you said, 'I don't care for anything now.'"

Then trying to smile in order to cheer her son, Marie added:

"Really, I can't imagine what is the matter with me to-day. I seem to be continually saying and doing the wrong thing, and here you are crying again, my dear child."

"Never mind, mother, never mind. It is a long time since I have cried, and I really believe it will do me good."

He spoke the truth. These tears did indeed seem to relieve his overburdened heart, and when he at last looked up in the face of the mother who was tenderly bending over him, and saw her beautiful features wearing

such an expression of infinite tenderness, he thought for an instant of confessing the feelings that tortured him.

"Yes, yes," he said to himself, "I was wrong to fear either scorn or anger from her. In her angelic goodness of heart I shall find only pity, compassion, consolation, and aid."

The mere thought of confessing all to his mother comforted him, and seemed even to restore a little of his former courage, for after a moment he said to Madame Bastien:

"You proposed a walk a few minutes ago, mother. I believe you are right in thinking that the open air would do me good."

This admission on her son's part seemed to Madame Bastien a good omen, and hastily donning her hat and a silk mantle, she left the house in company with her son.

But now the time for the confession had come, the youth shrank from it. He could think of no way to broach the subject, or to excuse himself to his mother for having concealed the truth from her so long.

As they were walking along, the sky, which had been so lowering all the morning, suddenly cleared, and the sun shone out brightly.

"What a delightful change!" exclaimed Madame Bastien, in the hope of cheering her son. "One might almost think that the radiant sun had emerged from the clouds to give you a friendly greeting. And how pretty that old juniper looks in this flood of sunlight. That old juniper over there at the end of the field, you remember it, of course?"

Frederick shook his head.

"What! you have forgotten those two long summer days when I sat in the shade of that old tree while you finished that poor labourer's work?"

"Oh, yes, that is true," replied Frederick, quickly.

The recollection of that generous act seemed to make

the thought of the painful confession he must make to his mother less painful, and his growing cheerfulness showed itself so plainly in his face that Madame Bastien said to him:

"I was right to insist upon your coming out, my child. You look so much brighter that I am sure you must be feeling better."

"I am, mother."

"How glad I am, my son," exclaimed Madame Bastien, clasping her hands, thankfully. "What if this should be the end of your malady, Frederick!"

As the young mother made this gesture of thankfulness, the light silk mantle she was wearing slipped from her shoulders unnoticed either by her or by Frederick, who replied:

"I don't know why it is, but I too hope like you, mother, that I shall soon be myself again."

"Ah, if you too hope so, we are saved," exclaimed his mother, joyfully. "M. Dufour told me that this strange and distressing malady which has been troubling you often disappears as suddenly as it came, like a bad dream, and health returns as if by enchantment."

"A dream!" exclaimed Frederick, looking at his mother with a strange expression on his face; "yes, mother, you are right. It was a bad dream."

"What is the matter, my child? You seem greatly excited, but it is with pleasurable emotion. I know that by your face."

"Yes, mother, yes! If you knew —"

But Frederick did not have time to finish the sentence. A sound that was coming nearer and nearer, but that Marie and her son had not noticed before, made them both turn.

A few yards behind them was a man on horseback, holding Madame Bastien's mantle in his hand.

Checking his horse, which a servant who was in attendance upon him hastened forward to hold, the rider

sprang lightly to the ground, and with his hat in one hand and the mantle in the other he advanced toward Madame Bastien, and bowing low, said, with perfect grace and courtesy of manner:

"I saw this mantle slip from your shoulders, madame, and deem myself fortunate in being able to return it to you."

Then with another low bow, having the good taste to thus evade Madame Bastien's thanks, the rider returned to his horse and vaulted into the saddle. As he passed Madame Bastien he deviated considerably from his course, keeping near a hedge that bordered the field, as if fearing the close proximity of his horse might alarm the lady, then bowed again, and continued on his way at a brisk trot.

This young man, who was about Frederick's age, and who had a remarkably handsome face and distinguished bearing, had evinced so much grace of manner and politeness, that Madame Bastien innocently remarked to her son:

"It is impossible to conceive of any one more polite or better bred, is it not, Frederick?"

Just as Madame Bastien asked her son this question, a small groom in livery, who was following the horseman, and who, like his master, was mounted upon a superb blooded horse, passed, the lad, who was evidently a strict observer of etiquette, having waited until his master was the prescribed twenty-five yards in advance of him before he moved from his place.

Madame Bastien motioned him to stop. He did so.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me your master's name?" asked the young woman.

"M. le Marquis de Pont Brillant, madame," replied the groom, with a strong English accent.

Then seeing that his master had started on a brisk trot, the lad did the same.

"Did your hear that, Frederick?" asked Marie, turning

to her son. "That was the young Marquis de Pont Brillant. Is he not charming? It is pleasant to see such a worthy representative of rank and fortune, is it not, my son? To be such a high and mighty personage, and so perfectly polite and well-bred, is certainly a charming combination. But why do you not answer me, Frederick? What is the matter, Frederick?" added Madame Bastien, suddenly becoming uneasy.

"There is nothing the matter with me, mother," was the cold reply.

"But there must be. Your face looks so different from what it did a moment ago. You must be suffering, and, great Heavens, how pale you are!"

"The sun has disappeared behind the clouds again, and I am cold!"

"Then let us hasten back, — let us hasten back at once! Heaven grant the improvement you spoke of just now may continue."

"I doubt it very much, mother."

"How despondently you speak."

"I speak as I feel."

"You are not feeling as well, then, my dear child?"

"Not nearly as well," the lad replied. Then added, with a sort of ferocious bitterness, "I have suffered a relapse, a complete relapse, but it is the cold that has caused it, probably."

And the unfortunate youth, who had always adored his mother, now experienced an almost savage delight in increasing his youthful parent's anxiety, thus avenging the poignant suffering which his mother's praises of Raoul de Pont Brillant had caused him.

Yes, for jealousy, a feeling as entirely unknown to Frederick as envy had been heretofore, now increased the resentment he already felt against the young marquis.

The mother and son wended their way homeward, Madame Bastien in inexpressible grief and disappoint-

ment, Frederick in gloomy silence, thinking with sullen rage that he had been on the point of confessing to his mother the shameful secret for which he blushed, and that at almost the very same moment that she was lavishing enthusiasm upon the object of his envy, the Marquis de Pont Brillant.

The unconscious comparison which his mother had made between the young marquis and himself, a comparison, alas! so unflattering to himself, changed the almost passive dislike he had heretofore felt for Raoul de Pont Brillant into an intense and implacable hatred.

CHAPTER VII.

THE little town of Pont Brillant is situated a few leagues from Blois, and not far from the Loire.

A promenade called the mall, shaded by lofty trees, bounds Pont Brillant on the south. A few houses stand on the left side of the boulevard, which also serves as a fair ground.

Doctor Dufour lived in one of these houses.

About a month had elapsed since the events we have just related.

Early in the month of November, on St. Hubert's Day, — St. Hubert, the reader may or may not recollect, is the hunter's patron saint, — the idlers of the little town had assembled on the mall about four o'clock in the afternoon to await the return of the young Marquis de Pont Brillant's hunting party from the neighbouring forest.

The afqresaid idlers were beginning to become impatient at the long delay, when a clumsy cabriolet, drawn by an old work-horse in a dilapidated harness, tied up here and there with strings, drove up to the doctor's door, and Frederick Bastien, stepping out of this extremely modest equipage, assisted his mother to alight.

The old horse, whose discretion and docility were established beyond all question, was left standing, with the lines upon his neck, close to the pavement in front of the doctor's house, which Madame Bastien and her son immediately entered.

An old servant woman ushered them into the parlour,

which was on the second floor, with windows overlooking the mall.

"Can the doctor see me?" inquired Madame Bastien.

"I think so, though he is with one of his friends who has been here for a few days but who leaves for Nantes this evening. I will go and tell him that you are here, though, madame."

Envy, aided by jealousy, — the reader probably has not forgotten the praises so innocently lavished upon the young marquis by Madame Bastien, — had made frightful ravages in Frederick's heart during the past month, and the deterioration in his physical condition having been correspondingly great, one would scarcely have known him. His complexion was not only pale, but jaundiced and bilious, while his hollow cheeks, sunken eyes, which burned with a feverish light, and the bitter smile which was ever upon his lips, imparted an almost ferocious as well as unnatural expression to his face. His abrupt, nervous movements, and his curt, often impatient, voice, also made the contrast between the youth's past and present condition all the more striking.

Marie Bastien seemed utterly disheartened and discouraged, but the gentle melancholy of her face only made her remarkable beauty still more touching in its character.

A cold reserve on Frederick's part had succeeded the demonstrative affection that had formerly existed between mother and son. Marie, in despair, had nearly worn herself out in her efforts to discover the cause of this change in her child, and she was now beginning to fear that M. Dufour had been mistaken in his diagnosis of her son's case. She had accordingly come to consult him again on the subject, not having seen him for some time, as the worthy doctor had been detained at home by the duties and pleasures of a friendly hospitality.

After having gazed sadly at her son for a moment,

Marie said to him, almost timidly, as if afraid of irritating him:

"Frederick, as you have accompanied me to the house of our friend, Doctor Dufour, whom I wish to consult in regard to myself, we had better take advantage of the opportunity to speak to him about you."

"It is not at all necessary, mother. I am not ill."

"Great Heavens! how can you say that? All last night you scarcely closed your eyes, my poor child. I went into your room several times to see if you were asleep and always found you wide awake."

"It is so almost every night."

"Alas! I know it, and that is one of the things that worry me so."

"You do very wrong to trouble yourself about it, mother. I shall get over it by and by."

"But consult M. Dufour, I beg of you. Is he not the best friend we have in the world? Tell him your feeling, and listen to his counsels."

"I tell you again there is no need for me to consult M. Dufour," replied the lad, impatiently. "I warn you, too, that I shall not answer one of his questions."

"But, my son, listen to me!"

"Good Heavens! mother, what pleasure do you find in tormenting me like this?" Frederick exclaimed, stamping his foot angrily. "I have nothing to tell M. Dufour, and I shall tell him nothing. You will find out whether I have any will of my own or not."

Just then the doctor's servant came in and said to Madame Bastien that the doctor was waiting for her in his office.

Casting an imploring look at her son, the young mother furtively wiped away her tears and followed the servant to the doctor's office. Frederick, thus left alone in the room, leaned his elbow upon the sill of the open window, which overlooked the mall as we have said

before. Between the mall and the Loire stretched a low range of hills, while in the horizon and dominating the forest that surrounded it was the Château de Pont Brillant, half veiled in the autumnal haze.

Frederick's eyes, after wandering aimlessly here and there for a moment, finally fixed themselves upon the château. On beholding it, the unfortunate lad started violently, his features contracted, then became even more gloomy, and with his elbows still resting on the window-sill he lapsed into a gloomy reverie.

So great was his preoccupation that he did not see or hear another person enter the room, a stranger, who, with a book in his hand, seated himself in a corner of the room without taking any notice of the youth.

Henri David, for that was the name of the newcomer, was a tall, slender man about thirty-five years of age. His strong features, embrowned by long exposure to the heat of the tropical sun, had a peculiar charm, due, perhaps, to an expression of habitual melancholy. His broad, rather high forehead, framed with wavy brown hair, seemed to indicate reflective habits, and his bright, dark eyes, surmounted by fine arched eyebrows, had a penetrating, though thoughtful expression.

This gentleman, who had just returned from a long journey, had been spending several days at the house of Doctor Dufour, his most intimate friend, but was to leave that same evening for Nantes to make preparation for another and even more extended journey.

Frederick, still leaning on the window-sill, never once took his eyes off the castle; and after a few moments Henri David, having laid his book on his knee, doubtless to reflect upon what he had just been reading, raised his head and for the first time really noticed the lad whose side-face was distinctly visible from where he sat. He gave a sudden start, and it was evident that the sight of the youth evoked some sad and at the same time precious memory in his heart, for two tears glittered in the

eyes that were fixed upon Frederick; then, passing his hand across his brow as if to drive away these painful recollections, he began to watch the boy with profound interest as he noted, not without surprise, the gloomy, almost heart-broken expression of his face.

The youth's eyes remained so persistently fixed upon the château that David said to himself:

"What bitter thoughts does the sight of the Château de Pont Brillant evoke in the mind of this pale, handsome youth that he cannot take his eyes off it?"

David's attention was suddenly diverted by the blare of trumpets still a long way off but evidently approaching the mall, and a few minutes afterward this promenade was thronged with a crowd, eager to see the cortège of hunters organised in honour of St. Hubert by the young marquis.

The expectations of the crowd were not disappointed. The shrill notes of the trumpets sounded louder and louder, and a brilliant cavalcade appeared at the end of the mall.

The procession began with four whippers-in on horseback, in buckskin jackets and breeches, with scarlet collars and facings richly trimmed with silver braid, with cocked hats on their heads and hunting knives in their belts. They also carried bugles, upon which they alternately sounded the calls for the advance and retreat of the hounds.

Then came fully one hundred magnificent hunting dogs of English breed, wearing upon their collars, still in honour of St. Hubert, big knots of fawn-coloured and scarlet ribbon.

Six keepers on foot, also in livery, with knee-breeches, silk stockings, and shoes with big silver buckles, also with hunting knives, followed the pack, responding with their horns to the bugles of the huntsmen.

A hunting fourgon, drawn by two horses driven tandem, served as a funeral-car for a magnificent stag

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reposing upon a bed of green branches, with his enormous antlers adorned with long floating ribbons.

Behind this fourgon came the huntsmen, all on horseback, some in long scarlet redingotes, others clad out of courtesy in uniform like that worn by the young Marquis de Pont Brillant.

Two barouches, each drawn by four magnificent horses driven by postilions in fawn-coloured satin jackets, followed the hunters. In one of these carriages was the dowager marquise as well as two young and beautiful women in riding-habits, with a rosette of the Pont Brillant colours on the left shoulder, for they had followed the chase from start to finish.

The other barouche, as well as a mail phaeton and an elegant *char-à-banc*, was filled with ladies and several elderly men, who by reason of age had merely played the part of onlookers.

A large number of superb hunters, intended to serve as relays in case of need, in richly emblazoned blankets and led by grooms on horseback, ended the cortège.

The perfect taste that characterised the whole display, the perfection of the dogs and horses, the richness of the liveries, the distinguished bearing of the gentlemen, and the beauty and elegance of the ladies that accompanied them would have excited admiration anywhere; but for the denizens of the little town of Pont Brillant this cortège was a superb spectacle, a sort of march from an opera, where neither music, gorgeous costumes, nor imposing display were lacking; so in their artless admiration the most enthusiastic, or perhaps the most polite of these townspeople, — a goodly number of them were tradespeople, — shouted, "Bravo, bravo, monsieur le marquis!" and clapped their hands excitedly.

Unfortunately, the triumphal progress of the cortège was disturbed momentarily by an accident that occurred almost under the windows of M. Dufour's house.

The reader has not forgotten the venerable steed that

had brought Madame Bastien to Pont Brillant and that had been left standing with the reins upon his neck in front of the doctor's house. The faithful animal had always proved worthy of the confidence reposed in him heretofore, and would doubtless have justified it to the end had it not been for this unwonted display.

At the first blast of the bugle, the old horse had contented himself with pricking up his ears, but when the procession began to pass him, the shrill notes of the hunting-horns, the baying of the hounds, the applause of the spectators, and the loud cries of the children, all combined to destroy the wonted composure of this aged son of toil, and neighing as loudly as in the palmy days of his youth, he evinced a most unfortunate desire to join the brilliant cortège that was crossing the mall.

With two or three vigorous bounds, the venerable animal, dragging the old chaise after him, landed in the midst of the gay cavalcade, where he distinguished himself by standing on his hind legs and pawing the air with his fore feet, abandoning himself to the ebullition of joy, directly in front of the barouche containing the dowager marquise, who drew back in terror, waving her handkerchief and uttering shrill cries of alarm.

Hearing this commotion, the young marquis glanced behind him to see what was the matter, then, wheeling his horse about, reached the side of his grandmother's carriage with a single bound, after which, with a few heavy blows of his riding-whip, he made the venerable but too vivacious work-horse realise the impertinence of this familiarity, — a hard lesson which was greeted with shouts of laughter and loud applause of the spectators.

As for the poor old horse, regretting doubtless the breach of confidence of which he had been guilty, he humbly returned of his own accord to the doctor's door, while the hunting cortège proceeded on its way.

Frederick Bastien, from the window where he was standing, had witnessed the entire scene.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN the cortège entered the mall, Frederick's countenance and expression underwent such a strange transformation that David, who had started toward the window on hearing the notes of the bugle, suddenly paused, forgetting everything else in his surprise, for the lad's face, in spite of its beauty, had become almost frightful in its expression. The bitter smile which had curved Frederick's lips while he was gazing at the distant château was succeeded by an expression of disdain when the cortège appeared, but when Raoul de Pont Brillant, clad in his costly hunting-suit and mounted on a magnificent jet black steed, passed amid the admiring plaudits of the crowd, Frederick's face became livid, and he clutched the window so violently that the veins, blue in his hands, stood out like whipcords under the white skin.

None of these details had escaped the notice of Henri David, who had had a wide experience with his kind, and his heart sank within him as he said to himself:

"Poor boy! to feel the pangs of hatred so early, for I cannot doubt that it is hatred he feels for that other lad on the handsome black horse! But what can be the cause of it?"

Henri David was asking himself this question when the little contretemps in which the old work-horse had played such a prominent part occurred.

On seeing his horse beaten, Frederick's face became terrible. His eyes dilated with anger, and, with a cry of rage, he would in his blind fury have precipitated himself from the window to run after the marquis, if he had not

been prevented by David, who seized him about the waist.

The surprise this occasioned recalled Frederick to himself, but, recovering a little from his astonishment, he demanded, in a voice trembling with anger:

"Who are you, monsieur, and why do you touch me?"

"You were leaning so far out of the window, my boy, that I feared you would fall," replied David, gently. "I wanted to prevent such a calamity."

"Who told you it would be a calamity?" retorted the youth.

Then turning abruptly away, he threw himself in an armchair, buried his face in his hands, and began to weep.

David's interest and curiosity were becoming more and more excited as he gazed with tender compassion at this unfortunate youth who seemed now as utterly crushed as he had been violently excited a short time before.

Suddenly the door opened, and Madame Bastien appeared, accompanied by the doctor.

"Where is my son?" asked Marie, glancing around the room, without even seeing David.

Madame Bastien could not see her son, the armchair in which he had thrown himself being concealed by the door that had been thrown open.

On seeing this beautiful young woman, who looked scarcely twenty, as we have said before, and whose features bore such a striking resemblance to Frederick's, David remained for a moment speechless with surprise and admiration, to which was added a profound interest when he learned that this was the mother of the youth for whom he already felt such a sincere compassion.

"Where is my son?" repeated Madame Bastien, advancing farther into the room and gazing around her with evident anxiety.

"The poor child is there," said David, in a low tone,

at the same time motioning the anxious parent to look behind the door.

There was so much sympathy and kindness in David's face as well as in the tone in which he uttered the words, that though Marie had been astonished at first at the sight of the stranger, she said to him now as if she had known him always:

"Good Heavens! what is the matter? Has anything happened to him?"

"Ah, mother," suddenly replied the youth, who had taken advantage of the moment during which he had been hidden from Madame Bastien's sight to wipe away his tears. Then bowing with a distrait air to Doctor Dufour, whom he had always treated with such affectionate cordiality before, Frederick approached his mother and said:

"Come, mother, let us go."

"Frederick," exclaimed Marie, seizing her son's hands and anxiously scrutinising his features, "Frederick, you have been weeping."

"No," he responded, stamping his foot impatiently, and roughly disengaging his hands from his mother's grasp. "Come, let us go, I say."

"But he has been weeping, has he not, monsieur?" again turning to David with a half-questioning, half-frightened air.

"Well, yes, I have been weeping," replied Frederick, with a sarcastic smile, "weeping for gratitude, for this gentleman here," pointing to David, "prevented me from falling out of the window. Now, mother, you know all. Come, let us go."

And Frederick turned abruptly toward the door.

Doctor Dufour, no less surprised and grieved than Madame Bastien, turned to David.

"My friend, what does this mean?" he asked.

"Monsieur," added Marie, also turning to the doctor's friend, embarrassed and distressed at the poor opinion

this stranger must have formed of Frederick, "I have no idea what my son means. I do not know what has happened, but I must beg you, monsieur, to excuse him."

"It is I who should ask to be excused, madame," replied David, with a kindly smile. "Seeing your son leaning imprudently far out of the window just now, I made the mistake of treating him like a schoolboy. He is proud of his sixteen summers, as he should be, for at that age," continued David, with gentle gravity, "one is almost a man, and must fully understand and appreciate all the charm and happiness of a mother's love."

"Monsieur!" exclaimed Frederick, impetuously, his nostrils quivering with anger, and a deep flush suffusing his pale face, "I need no lesson from you."

And turning on his heel, he left the room.

"Frederick!" cried Marie, reproachfully, but her son was gone; so turning her lovely face, down which tears were now streaming, to David, she said, with touching artlessness:

"Ah, monsieur, I must again ask your pardon. Your kind words lead me to hope that you will understand my regret, and that you will not blame my unhappy son too severely."

"He is evidently suffering, and should be pitied and soothed," replied David, sympathisingly. "When I first saw him I was startled by his pallor and the drawn appearance of his features. But he has gone, madame, and I would advise you not to leave him by himself."

"Come, madame, come at once," said Doctor Dufour, offering his arm to Madame Bastien, and the latter, divided between the surprise the stranger's kindness excited and the intense anxiety she felt in regard to her son, left the room precipitately in company with the doctor to overtake Frederick.

On being left alone, David walked to the window.

A moment afterward, he saw Madame Bastien come out of the house with her handkerchief to her eyes and leaning on the doctor, and step into the shabby little vehicle in which Frederick had already seated himself amid the laughs and sneers of the crowd that lingered on the mall, and that had witnessed the old work-horse's misadventure.

"That old nag won't forget the lesson the young marquis gave him for some time, I'll be bound," remarked one lounger.

"Wasn't he a sight when he planted himself with that old rattletrap of a chaise right in the midst of our young marquis's fine carriages?" remarked another.

"Yes, the old plug won't forget St. Hubert's Day in a hurry, I guess," added a third.

"Nor shall I forget it," muttered Frederick, trembling with rage.

At that moment the doctor assisted Madame Bastien into the vehicle, and Frederick, exasperated by the coarse jests he had just overheard, struck the innocent cause of all this commotion a furious blow, and the poor old horse, unused to such treatment, started off almost on a run.

In vain Madame Bastien implored her son to moderate the animal's pace. Several persons narrowly escaped being run over. A child who was slow in getting out of the way received a cut of the whip from Frederick, and whirling rapidly around the corner at the end of the mall, the chaise disappeared from sight amid the jeers and execrations of the angry crowd.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER he had escorted Marie to her carriage Doctor Dufour reëntered the house and found his friend still standing thoughtfully by the window.

On hearing the door open and close, David awoke from his reverie and turned toward the doctor, who, thinking of the painful scene which they had just witnessed, exclaimed, referring of course to Madame Bastien:

"Poor woman! poor woman!"

"The young woman does indeed seem greatly to be pitied," remarked David.

"Far more than you think, for she lives only for her son; so you can judge how she must suffer."

"Her son? Why, I thought he was her brother. She doesn't look a day over twenty. She must have married very young."

"At the age of fifteen."

"And how beautiful she is!" remarked Henri, after a moment's silence. "Her loveliness, too, is of an unusual type, — the at once virginal and maternal beauty that gives Raphael's virgin mothers such a divine character."

"Virgin mothers! The words are peculiarly appropriate in this connection. I will tell you Madame Bastien's story. I feel sure that it will interest you."

"You are right, my friend. It will give me food for thought during my travels."

"M. Fierval," began the doctor, "was the only son of a well-to-do banker of Angers; but several unfor-

tunate speculations involved him deeply, financially. Among his business friends was a real estate agent named Jacques Bastien, who was a native of this town and the son of a notary. When M. Fierval became embarrassed, Bastien, who had considerable ready money, gave him valuable pecuniary assistance. Marie was fifteen at the time, beautiful, and, like nearly all the daughters of thrifty provincials, brought up like a sort of upper servant in the house."

"What you say amazes me. Madame Bastien's manners are so refined. She has such an air of distinction —"

"In short, you see nothing to indicate any lack of early education in her."

"Quite the contrary."

"You are right; but you would not be so much surprised if you had witnessed the numerous metamorphoses in Madame Bastien that I have. Though she was so young she made a sufficiently deep impression upon our real estate man for him to come to me one day, and say:

"'I want to do a very foolish thing, that is to marry a young girl, but what makes the thing a little less idiotic, perhaps, is that the girl I have in view, though extremely pretty, has very little education, though she is a capital housewife. She goes to market with her father's cook, makes delicious pickles and preserves, and hasn't her equal in mending and darning.' Six weeks afterward, Marie, in spite of her aversion, and in spite of her tears and entreaties, yielded to her father's inexorable will, and became Madame Bastien."

"Was Bastien himself aware of the repugnance he inspired?"

"Perfectly; and this repugnance, by the way, was only too well justified, for Bastien, who was then forty-two years old, was as ugly as I am, to say the least, but had the constitution of a bull, — a sort of Farnese Hercules he was, in short, — though much more inclined to

embonpoint, as he is an immense eater, and not at all cleanly in his personal habits. So much for him physically. Mentally, he is coarse, ignorant, arrogant, and bigoted, insufferably proud of the money he has amassed. Strongly inclined to avarice, he thinks he is treating his wife very liberally by allowing her one servant, a gardener, who acts as a Jack-of-all-trades on the place, and an old work-horse to take her to town now and then. The only good thing about Bastien is that his business keeps him away about three-quarters of the time, for he buys large tracts of land all over the country, and, after dividing them up, sells these subdivisions to small farmers. When he does return to his present home, a farm which proved a poor investment, and which he has been unable to dispose of, he devotes his time to making as much money out of it as he can, getting up at sunrise to watch his crops put in, and returning only at night to sup voraciously, drink like a fish, and fall into a drunken sleep."

"You are right, Pierre, this poor woman is much more unfortunate than I supposed. What a husband for such a charming creature! But men like this Bastien, who are endowed with the appetites of the brute combined with the instinct of rapacity, are at least excessively fond of their wives and their young. M. Bastien at least loves his wife and son, does he not?"

"As for his wife, your comparison of a virgin mother was singularly appropriate, as I remarked a few minutes ago. A day or two after his marriage, Bastien, who has always persecuted me with his confidences, said, sullenly: 'If I were to yield to that prudish wife of mine I should remain a bachelor husband all the rest of my life.' And it would seem that he has been obliged to, for, alluding to his son, he remarked one day, 'It is a good thing for me I had a child when I did, but for that I should never have had one.' In his anger at finding himself rebuffed, he tried to punish poor Marie for the repugnance he had

inspired, but which he has been entirely unable to overcome, though he has resorted to brutality, to violence, and even to blows; for when this man is intoxicated he has not the slightest control over himself."

"Why, this is infamous!"

"Yes; and when I indignantly reproached him, he said: 'Nonsense. She is my wife, and the law is on my side. I didn't marry to remain a bachelor, and no slip of a girl like that is going to get the better of me.' And yet he has had to yield, for brute force cannot overcome a woman's aversion and loathing, particularly when the woman is endowed with remarkable strength of will like Marie Bastien. At first he intended to live in Blois, but his wife's resistance changed his plans. 'If this is the way she is going to act,' he said to me one day, 'she shall pay dearly for it. I have a farm near Pont Brillant. She shall live there alone on one hundred francs a month.' And he was as good as his word. Marie accepted the pinched and lonely life Bastien imposed upon her with courage and resignation, though Bastien did his best to make her existence as miserable as possible, until he learned that she was enceinte. After that he became a little more lenient, for though he still left Marie at the farm, he allowed her to make a few inexpensive changes, which, thanks to Madame Bastien's good taste, have quite transformed the abode. The amiability and many virtues of his charming wife seem to have wrought some slight improvement in Bastien, for though he is still coarse, he seems to be rather less of a brute, and to have decided to make the best of his life of a bachelor husband. 'Well, doctor, I was born lucky after all,' he remarked to me, not very long ago. 'My wife is living, and I am not sorry for it on the whole. She is sweet-tempered and patient and economical, and I never give her a penny except for household expenses, yet she seems perfectly contented. She never sets foot off the farm, and seems to think only of her son. On the other

hand, if my wife should die I should not be inconsolable, for, as you must understand yourself, to be a married man and yet have to lead a bachelor life has its objections as well as being very expensive; so whether my wife lives or dies I have no cause to complain. That was what I meant when I told you just now that I was really born lucky, after all.' "

"And his son, does he seem to really care anything about him?" inquired Henri, more and more interested.

"Bastien is one of those fathers who consider that a parent should always be crabbed and angry and fault-finding, so, during his rare sojourns at the farm, where he evinces more interest in his cattle than in his son, he always finds a means of incensing his child against him. The natural result of all this is that Bastien has no place in the lives of his wife and son. And, speaking of Frederick's education, I must tell you another of those admirable metamorphoses that maternal love has effected in Madame Bastien."

"Pray do, Pierre," said Henri, earnestly. "You have no idea how much this interests me."

"Reared as I have described, and married at the age of fifteen," continued the doctor, "Marie Bastien had received a very imperfect education, though she was really endowed with an unusual amount of intellectual ability. But when she became a mother, realising the importance of the duties devolving upon her, Marie, inconsolable at her ignorance, resolved to acquire in four or five years all the knowledge necessary to enable her to undertake her child's education, which she was determined to entrust to no one else."

"And this resolve?" inquired David.

"Was faithfully carried out. When she first broached the subject to Bastien he scoffed at the idea, but when Marie told him that she was determined not to be separated from her son, and reminded him how expensive it would be to have teachers come out to the farm from

Pont Brillant and later from Blois, Bastien concluded that his wife might be right, after all, and consented to the arrangement. Fortunately Marie found in a young Englishwoman a treasure of knowledge, intelligence, and kindheartedness. Miss Harriet, for that was her name, appreciating and admiring this rare example of maternal devotion, devoted herself body and soul to her mission, and, ably assisted by the natural talent and untiring industry of her pupil, in four years she had imparted to the young mother a thorough acquaintance with history, geography, and literature. Madame Bastien had also become a sufficiently good musician to teach her son music. She had also acquired a fair knowledge of the English language, a sufficient knowledge of drawing to be able to teach Frederick to draw from nature. He profited wonderfully well by these lessons, for few boys of his age are equally far advanced or so thoroughly grounded, and his mother certainly had good cause to feel proud of the effects both of her training and teaching, when she suddenly perceived a strange change in him."

The doctor was here interrupted by the entrance of the old servant, who, addressing her master, said:

"Monsieur, I came to warn you that the diligence for Nantes will pass at six o'clock, and they have come for M. David's baggage."

"Very well, they can take it, and will you ask them to be good enough to inform me when the diligence arrives?"

"Yes, M. David." Then, with an expression of artless regret, she added:

"Is it really true that you are going to leave us, M. David? Is it possible that you are going to let your friend go?" she added, turning to the doctor.

"Do you hear that?" asked M. Dufour, smiling sadly. "I am not the only person who regrets your departure, you see."

CHAPTER X.

AFTER the servant's departure, Henri David, still under the painful impression which his friend's revelations on the subject of Marie Bastien had produced, remained silent for several minutes.

Doctor Dufour, too, was silent and thoughtful, for the servant's announcement had reminded him that he was soon to be separated from his dearest friend, perhaps for years.

Henri was the first to speak.

"You were right, Pierre, I shall take away with me a delightful recollection of this charming Madame Bastien. What you have just told me will often be a subject of pleasant thought to me, and —"

"I understand you, Henri, and you must forgive me for not having thought of it sooner," exclaimed the doctor, noting his friend's emotion, "the sight of this youth must remind you —"

"Yes, the sight of this youth does remind me of one I can never forget, my poor Fernand," said Henri, seeing the doctor hesitate. "He was about Frederick's age, so it is only natural that this handsome boy should excite my interest, an interest which is naturally increased by the admiration I feel for his brave and devoted mother. Heaven grant that, after all her love and devotion, her son is not going to be a disappointment to her. But how is it that, after he has been reared with such care and solicitude, he should now give his mother such grave cause for anxiety?"

"The fact is that this lad, whom you have just seen

so pale and thin and sullen and irascible, was full of health and gaiety and good humour only a few months ago. Then the relations that existed between his mother and himself were of the most charming as well as affectionate character imaginable, while his generosity of heart could not have failed to excite your liveliest admiration."

"Poor boy," said Henri David, compassionately. "I believe you, Pierre, for there is such an expression of sadness and bitterness on his handsome face. It is evident that he is not bad at heart. It seems to me more as if he were suffering from some secret malady," added Henri, thoughtfully. "How strange it is that there should be such a remarkable change in him in so short a time!"

"I cannot understand it myself," replied the doctor, "for heart and mind and body all seem to have been attacked at the same time. A short time ago study was a pleasure to Frederick, his imagination was brilliant, his mental faculties almost precocious in their development. All this is changed now, and about a month ago his mother, distressed at the state of apathy into which her son had so suddenly relapsed, decided to employ a tutor for him, hoping that a change of instructors and new branches of study, more especially those of natural science, would act as a sort of stimulant."

"Well?"

"At the end of a week the tutor, disgusted with Frederick's dullness, rudeness, and violence, left the house."

"But to what do you attribute this remarkable change?"

"I thought and still think that it is due to natural or rather physical causes. There are many instances of similar crises in youths on attaining the age of puberty. It is a time of life when the salient traits of character begin to manifest themselves, when the man succeeding the youth begins to show what he is going to be some

day. This metamorphosis nearly always causes serious disturbance throughout the entire system, and it is quite probable that Frederick is now under the influence of this phenomenon."

"Doesn't this very plausible explanation reassure Madame Bastien?"

"One can never entirely reassure a mother, at least a mother like that. The reasons I gave her calmed her fears for awhile, but the trouble increased and she took fright again. In her interview with me just now she made no attempt to disguise her fears, and even accused herself of being to blame for the recent state of things. 'I am his mother and yet I cannot divine what is the matter with him, so I certainly must be lacking in penetration and in maternal instinct. I am his mother, and yet he will not tell me the cause of the trouble that is killing him. It is my fault. It must be. I cannot have been a good mother. A mother has always done something wrong if she cannot succeed in gaining her child's confidence.'"

"Poor woman!" exclaimed Henri. "She wrongs herself, though, in considering her maternal instinct in fault."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, doesn't her instinct warn her that you are wrong, plausible as your explanation of her son's condition is, for, in spite of her confidence in you, and in spite of the desire she feels to be reassured, your assurances have not calmed her fears."

Then, after sitting silent and thoughtful for a moment, Henri asked:

"Is that large building we see there in the distance the Château de Pont Brillant?"

"Yes. Its owner, the young marquis, was in the party that passed just now. But why do you ask?"

"Does Madame Bastien's son visit there?"

"Oh, no. The Pont Brillants are a very proud

and aristocratic family, and associate only with the nobility."

"So Frederick does not even know the young marquis?"

"If he does, it is only by sight, for I repeat the young marquis is much too proud to have anything to do with a youth of Frederick's humble station."

"Is this family popular?" inquired Henri David, more and more thoughtfully.

"The Pont Brillants are immensely rich, nearly all the land for six or seven leagues around belongs to them. They own, too, most of the houses in this little town. The tradespeople, too, are of course largely dependent upon their patronage, so this powerful family command at least a strong show of respect and attachment. There is also a certain amount of money given to the poor every year by the family. The mayor and the curé distribute it, however. The young marquis has nothing more to do with that than his grandmother, whose skepticism and cynicism make Baron Holbach's atheism seem pale by comparison. But why do you ask all these questions in relation to the château and its occupants?"

"Because just now when I was alone with Frederick I thought I discovered that he hated this young marquis with a deadly hatred."

"Frederick?" exclaimed the doctor, with quite as much surprise as incredulity. "That is impossible. I am sure he never spoke to M. de Pont Brillant in his life. So how could he possibly feel any such animosity against the young marquis?"

"I do not know, but I am sure, from what I have seen, that he does."

"What you have seen?"

"The horse that brought Frederick and his mother here, not being hitched, evinced an intention of joining the brillant cortège as it passed. The young marquis struck it a heavy blow with his whip and drove it back,

and if I had not restrained Frederick, he would have jumped out of the window and flown at M. de Pont Brillant."

"So it was in order not to frighten Madame Bastien you told us—"

"That Frederick had imprudently leaned too far out of the window. Yes, Pierre, I repeat it, I did not lose a gesture or the slightest change of expression in the poor boy's face. It is hatred, a deadly hatred, that he feels for the other youth."

"But I tell you that Madame Bastien's son has never even spoken to Raoul de Pont Brillant. They live in two entirely different worlds. They can never have come in the slightest contact with each other."

"True. Your reasoning seems perfectly just, and I suppose I ought to acquiesce," replied Henri David, thoughtfully. "Nevertheless, something tells me that I am right, and now I almost begin to regret having met this charming woman, for the very reason that she and her son have inspired me with such a deep interest."

"What do you mean?"

"Frankly, my friend, what can be more sad than to feel a commiseration as profound as it is futile? Who could be more worthy of sympathy and respect than this most unhappily married woman, who has lived even cheerfully for years in almost complete solitude, uncomplainingly, with a son as handsome, sensible, and intelligent as herself? And suddenly at one fell swoop this life is blighted; the mother watches with growing despair the progress of the mysterious malady the cause of which she has striven in vain to discover. Ah, I can understand only too well the agony of an experience like hers, for I too loved my poor Fernand almost to idolatry," continued Henri, scarcely able to restrain his tears, "and to me this utter powerlessness in the presence of an evil one deeply deplores has always been a source of torture, almost of remorse, to me."

"Yes, that is true," replied the doctor. "How often you said almost the very same thing in the letters you wrote me during your long and dangerous journeys, undertaken with such a noble object, but at the same time with the necessity of authenticating the most frightful facts, the most barbarous customs, the most atrocious laws, though realising all the while that this state of things must go on for years, and perhaps even for centuries, unhindered. Yes, yes, I can understand how it must try a soul like yours to see evils which it is impossible to assuage."

The clock in a neighbouring church struck three quarters past five.

"My dear friend, we have but a few minutes left," remarked Henri, holding out his hand to the doctor, who was unable to speak for awhile, so great was his emotion.

"Alas! my dear Henri," he said at last, "I ought to have accustomed myself to the idea of your departure, but you see my courage fails me after all."

"Nonsense, Pierre, I shall see you again in less than two years. This voyage will probably be the last I shall undertake, and then I am coming to take up my abode near you."

"Monsieur, monsieur, the Nantes diligence is coming in," cried the old servant, rushing into the room. "You haven't a minute to lose."

"Farewell, Pierre," said Henri, clasping his friend in a last embrace.

"Farewell. God grant we may meet again, my dear Henri."

A few minutes afterward, Henri David was on his way to Nantes, from which port he was to start on an expedition to Central Africa.

CHAPTER XI.

ONE more drop makes the cup run over, says the proverb. In like manner, the scene that had occurred on the mall at Pont Brillant on St. Hubert's Day had caused the rancour that filled Frederick Bastien's heart to overflow.

In the chastisement which the young marquis had inflicted upon his horse, Frederick saw an insult, or rather a pretext, that would enable him to manifest his hatred toward Raoul de Pont Brillant.

After a night spent in gloomy reflections, Madame Bastien's son wrote the following note:

"If you are not a coward, you will come to Grand Sire's Rock to-morrow morning with your gun loaded. I shall have mine. Come alone, I shall be alone.

"I hate you. You shall know my name when I have told you to your face the reason of my hatred.

"Grand Sire's Rock stands in a lonely part of your forest. I shall be there all the morning, and all day if necessary, waiting for you: so you will have no excuse for failing to come."

This absurd effusion can be explained only by Frederick's youth and intense animosity, as well as his utter lack of experience and the isolation in which he had lived.

This effusion written and posted, the youth feigned unusual calmness all day, so no one would suspect his designs.

When night came, he told Madame Bastien that he felt very tired and intended to stay in bed all the next forenoon, and that he did not want any one to come to his room until after he got up; so the mother, hoping rest would prove beneficial to her son, promised his request should be complied with.

At daybreak Frederick cautiously made his escape through his bedroom window and hastened to the place of rendezvous. As he approached it his heart throbbed with ferocious ardour, feeling confident that Raoul de Pont Brillant would hasten to avenge the insult contained in this insulting note he had received.

"He shall kill me, or I will kill him," Frederick said to himself. "If he kills me, so much the better. What is the use of dragging out a life poisoned with envy? If I kill him —"

He shuddered at the thought, then, ashamed of his weakness, he continued:

"If I kill him, it will be better yet. He will cease to enjoy the pleasures and luxuries that arouse my envy. If I kill him," added the unfortunate youth, trying to justify this bloodthirsty resolve on his part, "his luxury will no longer flaunt itself before my poverty and the poverty of many others who are even more to be pitied than I am."

The name of Grand Sire's Rock had been bestowed centuries before on a pile of big granite boulders only a short distance from one of the least frequented paths in the forest, and, as a number of large chestnut and pine trees had sprung up between the moss-covered rocks, it was a wild and lonely spot, well suited for a hostile meeting.

Frederick deposited his gun in a sort of natural grotto formed by a deep opening half concealed by a thick curtain of ivy. This spot was only about forty yards from the road by which the marquis must come if he came at all, so Frederick stationed himself in a place where he

could see quite a distance down the road without being seen.

One hour, two hours, three hours passed and Raoul de Pont Brillant did not come.

Unable to believe that the young marquis could have scorned his challenge, Frederick, in his feverish impatience, devised all sorts of excuses for his adversary's delay. He had not received the letter until that morning; he had doubtless been obliged to do some manœuvring to be able to go out alone; possibly he had preferred to wait until nearer evening.

Once Frederick, thinking of his mother and of her despair, said to himself that perhaps in less than an hour he would have ceased to live.

This gloomy reflection rather weakened his resolution for a moment, but he soon said to himself:

"It will be better for me to die. My death will cost my mother fewer tears than my life, judging from those I have already compelled her to shed."

While he was thus awaiting the arrival of the marquis, a carriage that had left the château about three o'clock in the afternoon paused at the intersection of the footpath not far from the so-called Grand Sire's Rock.

When this low, roomy equipage drawn by two magnificent horses stopped at the cross-roads, two tall, powdered footmen descended from their perch, and one of them opened the carriage door, through which the Dowager-Marquise de Pont Brillant alighted quite nimbly in spite of her eighty-eight years; after which another woman, quite as old as the dowager, also stepped out.

The other footman, taking one of the folding-chairs which invalids or very old people often use during their walks, was preparing to follow the two octogenarians when the marquise said, in a clear though rather quavering voice:

"Remain with the carriage, which will wait for me here. Give the folding-chair to Zerbinette."

To answer to the coquettish, pert name of Zerbinette at the age of eighty-seven seems odd indeed, but when she entered the service of her foster-sister, the charming Marquise de Pont Brillant, seventy years before, as assistant hair-dresser, her retroussé nose, pert manner, big, roguish eyes, provoking smile, trim waist, small foot, and dimpled hand richly entitled her to the sobriquet bestowed upon her at that time by the marquise, who, married direct from the convent at the age of sixteen, was already considerably more than flirtatious, and who, struck by her assistant hair-dresser's boldness of spirit and unusual adaptability for intrigue, soon made Zerbinette her chief maid and confidante.

Heaven only knows the good times and larks of every sort this pair had enjoyed in their palmy days, and the devotion, presence of mind, and fertility of resource Zerbinette had displayed in assisting her mistress to deceive the three or four lovers she had had at one time.

The deceased husband of the marquise need be mentioned only incidentally in this connection; in the first place because one did not take the trouble to deceive a husband in those days, and in the second place because the high and mighty seigneur Hector-Magnifique-Raoul-Urbain-Anne-Cloud-Frumence, Lord Marquis of Pont Brillant and half a dozen other places, was too much of a man of his time to interfere with madame, his wife, in the least.

From this constant exchange of confidences on the part of the marquise and of services of every sort and kind on the part of Zerbinette there had resulted a decided intimacy between mistress and maid. They never left each other, they had grown old together, and their chief pleasure now consisted in talking over the escapades and love affairs of former years, and it must be admitted that each day had its saint in their calendar.

The dowager-marquise was small, thin, wrinkled, but very straight. She dressed in the most elaborate fashion and was always redolent with perfumes. She wore her hair crimped and powdered, and there was a bright red spot on each cheek that increased the brilliancy of her large black eyes, which were still bold and lustrous in spite of her advanced age. She carried a small gold-headed ivory cane, and a richly jewelled snuff-box from which she regaled herself from time to time.

Zerbinette, who was a little taller than her mistress, but equally thin, wore her white hair in curls, and was attired with simple elegance.

"Zerbinette," said the dowager, after turning to take another look at the footman who had opened the carriage door, "who is that tall, handsome fellow? I don't remember to have seen him before."

"I doubt if you have, madame. He was just sent down from Paris."

"He's a fine-shaped fellow. Did you notice what broad shoulders he has, Zerbinette? Handsome lackeys always remind me"—the marquise paused to take a pinch of snuff—"handsome lackeys always remind me of that little devil the Baroness de Montbrison."

"Madame la marquise has forgotten. It was the French Guards the baroness—"

"You are right, and the Duc de Biron, their colonel—You remember M. de Biron, don't you?"

"I should think I did. You had a pass-key to his little house on the Boulevard des Poissonniers, and for your first rendezvous you dressed in the costume of Diana, the huntress, exactly as in that handsome pastel portrait of yourself. And how beautiful, ravishingly beautiful, you looked in the costume, with your slim waist and white shoulders and gleaming eyes!"

"Yes, my girl, yes. I had all those, and I made a good use of what the Lord gave me. But to return to my story; you are right, Zerbinette, in regard to the little

baroness, it was the French Guards she went so crazy about, so much so, in fact, that M. de Biron, their colonel, went to the king and complained that his regiment was being ruined. 'I can't have that,' replied the king, 'I want my French Guards for myself. Montbrison got money enough by his wife to buy a regiment for her if she wants it.'"

"Unfortunately, M. de Montbrison was not a sufficiently gallant gentleman to do that. And speaking of handsome lackeys, madame must be thinking of Président de Lunel's wife, for —"

"Lunel!" exclaimed the dowager, pausing and glancing around her. "Say, we are not far from Grand Sire's Rock, are we?"

"No, madame."

"I thought not. Do you remember that story of the osprey and poor Président de Lunel?"

"I only remember that monsieur le président was as jealous as all possessed of the Chevalier de Bretteville, and he had good cause to be. So it used to afford madame no end of amusement to invite them both to the castle at the same time."

"Yes, and that was what reminded me of that affair of the osprey."

"I really have no idea what you mean."

"Ah, Zerbinette, you are growing old."

"Alas, yes, madame!"

"Well, we might as well walk in one direction as another, so suppose we pay a visit to Grand Sire's Rock. The sight of the dear old rock will rejuvenate me. Let me see, Zerbinette," added the marquise, taking another pinch of snuff, "when was it that poor Lunel and the chevalier were —"

"In October, 1779," responded Zerbinette, promptly.

"Sixty-odd years ago. Come and let us go and take a look at the famous rock. It will make me feel young again."

"Very well, madame, but won't you find the walk too fatiguing?"

"I have the legs of fifteen this morning, girl, but if they should fail me, you have my chair, you know."

CHAPTER XII.

As the two octogenarians started slowly down the path leading to Grand Sire's Rock, Zerbinette remarked to her mistress:

"You were going to tell the story of the osprey, madame."

"Oh, yes. You recollect how jealous Président de Lunel was of the chevalier. Well, one day I said to him, 'Sigismond, wouldn't you like to help me play a fine joke upon the chevalier?' 'I should be delighted, marquise.' 'But to do it, Sigismond, you must know how to imitate the cry of the osprey perfectly.' You can imagine the look on the president's face when I told him that; but when I said to him, 'Learn it, Sigismond, and as soon as you know it we will have a good laugh at the poor chevalier's expense,' he promised he would begin that very evening, as there were plenty of them in the neighbourhood. When the president had learned to imitate the cry, I made an appointment to meet the chevalier here at dusk. I came a little in advance of the time, in company with the president, whom I ensconced in the sort of cave at Grand Sire's Rock. 'Now, Sigismond, listen carefully to what I am going to say to you,' I began. 'The chevalier will soon be here. You are to count one thousand, so as to give him time to press his suit. I, too, will count a thousand, but not until we get to nine hundred and ninety-eight will I show any signs of softening toward the chevalier. Then you must begin to utter your osprey cries.' 'Capital, marquise, cap-

ital!' 'Hush, you bad boy, and listen to me. I shall say to the chevalier, "Oh, that horrid bird! I am frightfully superstitious about the osprey. Run to the château and get a gun to kill the hateful thing, and afterward we will see." The chevalier will run to get the gun, and then, my dear Sigismond, I will join you in the cave.' 'Really, marquise, you are the most charming little devil imaginable!' 'Hide, hide quick! here comes the chevalier.' And poor Lunel withdrew into his hole and began to count one, two, three, four, etc., while I went to join the chevalier."

"I can see the dear president's face now, as he carefully counted one, two, three, four, while the chevalier was with you," exclaimed Zerbinette, laughing like mad.

"All I can tell you, girl, is that though I had promised poor Lunel not to soften toward the chevalier until we had got to nine hundred and ninety-eight, I really didn't count more than ten. After awhile, the president, who had finished his thousand, began to play the osprey with all his might, and his strange, shrill, wild cries seemed to disturb the chevalier so much that I said:

"'It is the osprey. Run to the château and get a gun to kill the horrid thing. I hate the abominable creature so I long to tear it in pieces with my own hands. Run and get the gun. I will wait for you here.' 'What a strange whim, marquise. It is getting very dark, and you will be afraid here in the forest alone.' 'Nonsense, chevalier, I am no coward. Run to the château and come back as soon as you can.' It was quite time, my girl, for when I went to the poor president, his voice had begun to fail him, but fortunately he was all right again in a minute."

"And when the chevalier returned, madame?"

"He found the president and me not far from the place where we are now. 'You have come at last,

chevalier,' I called out to him at a distance; 'but for the president, whom I met by chance, I should have died of fear.' 'I told you so, marquise,' he replied. 'And the osprey, I think I must have frightened him off, for I haven't heard him since I met the marquise,' replied the president. 'But, by the way, my dear chevalier,' added poor Lunel, innocently, 'do you know that the cry of the osprey always indicates some calamity?' and as he spoke the president slyly squeezed my left arm. 'Yes, my dear president, I have always heard that the cry is prophetic of evil,' responded the chevalier, squeezing my right arm. Afterward, when I went crazy over that actor, Clairville, he and I had many a good laugh over this little affair with the president and the chevalier, so for a long time 'It is the osprey' was a sort of proverb among the people of our set."

"Alas! those were fine times, madame."

"Oh, hush up, Zerbinette, with your alases! Those good times will come again."

"But when, madame?"

"Why, in the next world, of course. That was what I used to nearly wear myself out telling Abbé Robertin, who used to go nearly crazy over those delicious white truffles my cousin Doria used to send me. 'Well, madame la marquise, it is surely better to believe in that sort of an immortality than in nothing at all,' he used to reply, while he went on cramming himself. In other words, my girl, I expect to get my girlhood again, and all that goes with it, when I reach paradise."

"God grant it, madame," responded Zerbinette, devoutly. "Sixteen is certainly a delightful age."

"That is exactly what I said to myself yesterday while I was watching my grandson. What ardour and enthusiasm he displayed during the hunt! He's a handsome — But look, here is Grand Sire's Rock. It was in that little cave that the poor president played the part of an osprey."

"Don't go any closer to it, for Heaven's sake, madame. There may be some wild beast in it."

"I thought of going in to rest awhile."

"Don't think of such a thing, madame. It must be as damp as a cellar in there."

"That's a fact, so set my chair under this oak-tree, there on the sunny side. That is right. Where will you find a seat, Zerbinette?"

"Over there on that rock. It is a little closer to the cave than I like, but never mind."

"We were speaking of my grandson just now. He is a handsome fellow, there is no doubt about it."

"There is a certain viscountess who seems to be of the same opinion. It is always M. Raoul this, or M. Raoul that, and I have seen —"

"You have seen, you have seen — Why, you see nothing at all, girl. The viscountess takes a little notice of the boy merely to blind her idiot of a husband, so he won't get mad and make a fuss when M. de Monbreuil, the viscountess's lover arrives, for I have invited him to come in a few days. There is nothing that makes a house as lively and interesting as to have a lot of lovers about, so I invite all I know; but it is strange you haven't seen through the lady's manœuvre. I warned my grandson, for I feared the innocent, unsophisticated fellow might come to grief, the viscountess is so charming."

"Innocent, unsophisticated!" exclaimed Zerbinette, shaking her head. "You're mistaken about that, madame, for his infatuation for the mistress doesn't keep him from playing the deuce with her maid."

"Dear boy! Is that really true, Zerbinette? Is there anything worth looking at among the women the viscountess brought with her?"

"There is one tall blonde with dark eyes, plump as a partridge, with a complexion like milk, and the loveliest figure —"

"And you think that Raoul —"

"You know, madame, that at his age —"

"*Pardi!*" exclaimed the marquise, taking another pinch of snuff. "That reminds me," she continued, after a moment's reflection, "you know all about everybody in the neighbourhood, who is it that leads the life of a hermitess in that lonely farmhouse on the Pont Brillant road? You know the place; the house is covered with vines, and there is a porch of rustic work very much like that house my grandson has just been building for his fawns."

"Oh, yes, I know, madame. It is Madame Bastien who lives there."

"And who is Madame Bastien?"

"Did you hear that, madame?" asked Zerbinette, breathlessly.

"What?"

"Why, there in the cave. I heard something moving in there."

"Nonsense, Zerbinette, how silly you are! It is the wind rustling the ivy leaves."

"Do you really think so, madame?"

"There isn't the slightest doubt of it. But, tell me, who is this Madame Bastien?"

"She is the wife of a real estate agent. I suppose you would call him that, for he travels about the country buying tracts of land which he afterward subdivides and sells. He is scarcely ever at home."

"Ah, he is scarcely ever at home, that would be a great advantage, eh, Zerbinette. But tell me, is it true that this little Bastien is as pretty as people say?"

"She's a beauty, there's no doubt about it, madame. You remember Madame la Maréchale de Rubempré, don't you?"

"Yes, and this young woman?"

"Is as beautiful as she was, perhaps even more so."

"And her figure?"

"Is perfect."

"That is what Raoul told me after he met her in the fields the other day. But who is that big sallow boy who was with her? Some scallawag of a brother probably. It might be a good idea to get him out of the way by giving him a position as clerk in the steward's office with a salary of twelve or fifteen hundred francs a year."

"Good heavens, madame!" exclaimed Zerbinette, springing up in alarm, "there's somebody in the cave. Didn't you hear that noise?"

"Yes, I heard it," replied the intrepid dowager, "what of it?"

"Oh, madame, let us get away as quick as we can."

"I sha'n't do anything of the kind."

"But that noise, madame."

"He, he!" laughed the countess. "Perhaps it is the soul of the poor president come back to count one, two, three, four, etc. Sit down, and don't interrupt me again."

"You have always had the courage of a dragon, madame."

"There's no cause for alarm, you goose. Some osprey or some wild animal may have sought shelter there. I want to know who that big hulking boy was that Raoul saw with that Bastien woman, — her brother, eh?"

"No, madame, her son."

"Her son; why, in that case —"

"She was married when she was very young, and she is so admirably preserved that she doesn't look a day over twenty."

"That must be so, for Raoul took a desperate fancy to her. 'She has big, dark blue eyes, grandmother,' he said to me, 'a waist one can span with his two hands, and features as regular as those on an antique cameo. Only these plebeians are so little versed in the customs of good society that this one opened her big eyes in astonishment, merely because I was polite enough to take her a mantle she had dropped.' 'If she is as pretty

as you say, you young simpleton, you ought to have kept the mantle, and taken it to her house. That would have gained you an entrance there.' 'But, grandmother,' replied the dear boy, very sensibly, 'it was by returning the mantle I found out that she was so pretty.'"

"Oh, well, M. Raoul could easily have gone to her house a few days afterward. She would have been delighted to see him, even if it were only to make all the *bourgeoisie* in the country wild with envy."

"That is exactly what I told the dear child, but he did not dare to venture."

"Give him a little time, and he'll get his courage up, never fear."

"I tell you, my girl," resumed the dowager, after quite a long silence, as she slowly and thoughtfully took another pinch of snuff, "I tell you that the more I think of it, the more convinced I am that for many reasons this little Bastien would just suit the dear boy, that she would be a perfect godsend to him, in fact."

"I think so, too, madame."

"So we had better strike while the iron is hot," continued the dowager. "What time is it, Zerbinette?"

"Half-past four, madame," said the attendant, glancing at her watch.

"That gives us plenty of time. This morning when my grandson left to spend the day with the Merinvilles at Boncour, I promised him I would meet him at the lake at five o'clock, so we must make haste."

"But, madame, you forget that M. Raoul sent his groom to tell you that he was going to pay a call at Montel after leaving Boncour, and that he would not return to the château before seven."

"Yes, yes, you are right, girl. I must give up seeing him immediately then, for to return from Montel he will have to take the Vieille Coupe road, and that is too steep for me, for I'm a perfect coward in a carriage; besides, as it is only half-past four, I should have to drive

too far to meet him, so I will postpone my conversation on the subject of the hermitess until this evening. Give me your arm, Zerbinette, and let us start, but first let me take another look at this famous rock."

"Don't go too near though, madame, for Heaven's sake."

But in spite of Zerbinette's protest she walked up to the rock, and, casting an almost melancholy glance at the wild spot, exclaimed:

"Ah, there is no change in the rocks. They look exactly as they did sixty years ago."

Then after a moment's silence, turning gaily to Zerbinette, who was holding herself prudently aloof, the dowager added:

"That story of the osprey has recalled hundreds of other pleasant reminiscences. I've a great mind to amuse myself by writing my memoirs some day. They might serve both to instruct and edify my grandson," the octogenarian continued, with a hearty laugh, in which Zerbinette joined.

For several minutes the sound of their laughter could be distinctly heard as the two slowly wended their way down the path.

When the sound had entirely died away, Frederick, his face livid, his expression frightful to behold, emerged from the cave where he had heard every word of the conversation between the dowager-marquise and Zerbinette, and, gun in hand, hastened toward another part of the forest.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE Vieille Coupe road, which Raoul de Pont Brillant would be obliged to take on his return from the Château de Montel homeward, was a sort of deep hollow way, with high banks covered with tall pine-trees, whose heads formed such an impenetrable dome that the light was dim there even at noontime, and at sunset it was so dark that two men who met there would not be able to distinguish each other's features.

It was about six o'clock in the evening when Raoul de Pont Brillant turned in this path, which seemed all the darker and more gloomy from the fact that the highway he had just left was still lighted by the rays reflected from the setting sun. He was alone, having sent his groom to the château to inform the marquise of his change of plans.

He had proceeded only twenty yards when his vision became sufficiently accustomed to the obscurity to enable him to distinguish a human being standing motionless in the middle of the road, a short distance in front of him.

"Hallo there, get to one side of the road or the other," he shouted.

"One word, M. le Marquis de Pont Brillant," responded a voice.

"What do you want?" asked Raoul, checking his horse and leaning over upon his saddle, in a vain effort to distinguish the features of his interlocutor. "Who are you? What do you want?"

"M. de Pont Brillant, did you receive a note this

morning requesting you to meet some one at Grand Sire's Rock?"

"No; for I left Pont Brillant at eight o'clock; but once more, what does all this mean? Who the devil are you?"

"I am the writer of the letter sent you this morning."

"Ah, well, my friend, you can—"

"I am not your friend," interrupted the voice, "I am your enemy."

"What's that you say?" exclaimed Raoul, in surprise.

"I say that I am your enemy."

"Indeed!" retorted Raoul, in a half-amused, half-contemptuous tone, for he was naturally very brave. "And what is your name, Mister Enemy?"

"My name is a matter of no consequence."

"Probably not, but why the devil do you stop me in the road at nightfall, then? Ah, I remember you said you wrote to me."

"Yes."

"To tell me what?"

"That you were a coward if you—"

"Wretch!" exclaimed Raoul, starting his horse.

But Madame Bastien's son struck the horse in the head with the barrel of his gun, forcing him to stop.

Raoul, a trifle startled at first, but really curious to know what the stranger was coming at, calmed himself, and remarked, coldly:

"You did me the honour to write to me, you say?"

"Yes, to tell you that if you were not a coward, you would come to Grand Sire's Rock to-day with your gun loaded like mine."

"And may I ask what we were to do with our guns?"

"We were to place ourselves ten paces apart, and then fire at each other."

"And for what object may I ask?"

"So I would kill you or you would kill me."

"That would probably have been the case at that dis-

tance unless we were very poor shots. But if one is so anxious to kill people, one should at least tell me why."

"I want to kill you — because I hate you."

"Bah!"

"Do not sneer, M. de Pont Brillant, do not sneer."

"It is very difficult not to, but I'll try simply to oblige you. You hate me, you say, and why?"

"The cause of my hatred concerns you as little as my name."

"Do you really think so?"

"I do."

"Well, you hate me, you say? What of it?"

"You must kill me or I shall kill you."

"That seems to be a settled thing with you. Where are we to fight?"

"Here, right here and now."

"But it isn't light enough to see."

"There is no need of its being light enough to see."

"But what are we to fight with?"

"With my gun."

"One gun?"

"Yes."

"That's a strange idea. How are we to do it?"

"Get down off your horse."

"And after that?"

"Pick up a handful of stones out of the road."

"Stones! So it is with stones that we are going to fight. It reminds me of the famous battle between David and Goliath."

"I said that you were to pick up a handful of stones out of the road. The darkness will prevent you from counting the stones, and you will hold them in your closed hand. The one who guesses the number correctly is to have the gun. He will place it against the other's breast and fire. You see that no daylight is needed for that, M. de Pont Brillant."

Frederick's manner was so resolute and his voice so incisive that the young marquis, strange as the whole affair seemed to be, decided that the speaker was really in earnest; then, suddenly remembering a conversation that had taken place in his grandmother's drawing-room, he burst into a hearty laugh and exclaimed:

"This is a good joke, upon my word. I understand everything now."

"Explain, M. de Pont Brillant."

"Last night at the château they were all telling stories about robbers and midnight attacks, and they laughed about what I would do under such circumstances. I talked a little boastfully of my courage, I suppose, so they concocted this little scheme to test it, for they knew that I would have to pass through this road in returning from Montel. You can tell the persons that paid you to waylay me that I behaved myself very creditably, for, upon my word as a gentleman, I took the thing seriously at first. Good night, my worthy friend. Let me pass now, for it is getting late, and I shall scarcely have time to reach Pont Brillant and dress before dinner."

"This is no joke, M. de Pont Brillant, nor is it a test. You will not be allowed to pass, and you are going to get down off your horse."

"I have had enough of this, I tell you," exclaimed Raoul, imperiously. "You have earned your money. Now stand aside so I can pass."

"Dismount, M. de Pont Brillant, dismount, I say!"

"So much the worse for you, I'll ride right over you," cried Raoul, now thoroughly enraged.

And he urged his horse on.

But Frederick seized the horse by the bridle, and with a violent jerk forced the animal back upon its haunches.

"How dare you touch my horse, you scoundrel!" roared Raoul, raising his whip and striking at random, but the blow fell only upon empty air.

"I consider the blow and the insulting epithet received, M. de Pont Brillant, and now you will indeed be a coward if you don't dismount at once and give me the satisfaction I demand."

As we have remarked before, Raoul was naturally brave; he was also as experienced in the ways of the world as most young men of twenty-five, so this time he answered very seriously and with remarkable good sense and firmness:

"You have charged me with cowardice, and you have grossly insulted me besides, so I tried to chastise you as one chastises a vagabond who insults you on a street corner. Unfortunately the darkness rendered my attempts futile, and you will be obliged to take the will for the deed. If this doesn't satisfy you, you know who I am and you can come to the Château de Pont Brillant to-morrow with two honourable men, if you know any, which I doubt very much, judging from your actions. These gentlemen can confer with the Vicomte de Marcilly and M. le Duc de Morville, my seconds. Your seconds will tell my seconds your name and the cause of the challenge you say you sent me this morning. These gentlemen will decide between them what should be done. I am perfectly willing to abide by their decision. That is the way such affairs are managed among well-bred people. As you don't know, I will endeavour to teach you."

"And you refuse to fight me here and now?"

"I do, most decidedly."

"Take care. Either you or I will remain here!"

"Then it will be you, so good night," said Raoul.

As he spoke he plunged his spurs into his horse's sides. The animal made a powerful spring forward, hurling Frederick to the ground.

When Madame Bastien's son, still stunned from his fall, staggered to his feet, he heard the sound of Raoul's horse's hoofs already dying away in the distance.

After a brief moment of stupor, Frederick uttered a cry of ferocious joy, and, picking up his gun, climbed one of the almost perpendicular banks on the side of the road with the aid of the pine saplings, and plunged headlong into the forest.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHILE these events were transpiring in the forest of Pont Brillant, Madame Bastien was a prey to the most poignant anxiety. Faithful to the promise she had made Frederick the evening before, she waited until nearly one o'clock in the afternoon before entering her son's room. Believing he was still sleeping, she hoped he would derive much benefit from this restful slumber.

The young mother was in her chamber, which adjoined her son's room, listening every now and then for some sound that would seem to indicate that her son was awake, when Marguerite, their old servant, came in to ask for some instructions.

"Speak low, and close the door carefully," said Marie. "I don't want my son waked."

"M. Frederick, madame; why, he went out this morning at sunrise with his gun."

To rush into her son's bedroom was the work of only an instant.

Frederick was not there; his gun, too, was missing.

Several hours passed, but Frederick did not appear, and the light of the dull November day was already beginning to wane when Marguerite came running in.

"Madame, madame," she exclaimed, "here is Father André! He saw M. Frederick this morning."

"You saw my son this morning, André? What did he say to you? Where is he now?" cried Madame Bastien, eagerly.

"Yes, madame, M. Frederick came to me for some bullets about sunrise this morning."

"Bullets? What did he want of them?" asked the anxious mother, trying to drive away the horrible suspicion that had suddenly presented itself to her mind. "Did he want them for hunting?"

"Of course, madame; for M. Frederick told me that Jean François — you know Jean François, the farmer near Coudraie?"

"Yes, yes, I know; go on."

"It seems that Jean François told M. Frederick yesterday that a wild boar got into his garden a night or two ago, and ruined his potatoes; and M. Frederick told me he was going to station himself in a hiding-place that Jean François knew of, and kill the animal."

"But that is so dangerous," cried Madame Bastien. "Frederick never shot at a boar in his life. If he misses, he is sure to be killed."

"I don't think you need feel any anxiety, madame. M. Frederick is an excellent shot, and —"

"Then my son is at the farmer's house now, I suppose?"

"I presume so, as he is going with the farmer this evening."

A quarter of an hour afterward the young mother, panting and breathless, — for she had run every step of the way, — knocked at the door of the farmhouse, where Jean François and his wife and children were seated around the fire.

"Jean François, take me where my son is at once," cried Madame Bastien; then she added, reproachfully, "How could you allow a youth of his age to expose himself to such danger? But come, I entreat you, come, it may not be too late to prevent this imprudence on his part."

The farmer and his wife exchanged looks of profound astonishment, then Jean François said:

"Excuse me, madame, but I've no idea what you mean."

"Didn't you complain to my son last night of a wild boar that had been ravaging your garden?"

"Oh, the boars find so many nuts in the forest this year that they are not inclined to leave it. They have done us no damage up to the present time, thank Heaven."

"But you urged my son to come and take a shot at some boar."

"No, madame, no; I never even spoke of any boar to him."

Overcome with dread and consternation, Marie stood perfectly silent and motionless for a moment. At last she murmured:

"Frederick lied to André. And those bullets — my God! — those bullets, what did he intend to do with them?"

The honest farmer, seeing Madame Bastien's intense anxiety, and thinking to reassure her at least in a measure, said to her:

"I never said anything to M. Frederick about hunting boars, but if you want to find him, I think I know where he is."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Yes, madame. Madame knows that steep hill about a mile from the Vieille Coupe road, as you go to the château through the forest?"

"Yes, yes; what of it?"

"Why, just at dusk I was coming down that hill on my way home, when I saw M. Frederick come out of the forest and cross the road on the run."

"How long ago was this?"

"At least half an hour."

"Jean François, you are a good man. I am in great trouble. Take me to the place where you saw my son, I implore you," pleaded the young mother.

"I see what the trouble is, madame, and I don't know but you have good cause to feel anxious — "

"Go on — go on."

"Well, the fact is that you're afraid that M. Frederick may be caught poaching in the Pont Brillant woods. I feel in the same way, madame, and I honestly think we have reason to be alarmed, for the young marquis is bitter against poachers, and as jealous of his game as his deceased father used to be. His guards are always on the watch, and if they find M. Frederick poaching it will go hard with him."

"Yes, yes, that is what I am afraid of," replied Madame Bastien, quickly. "You see we haven't a minute to lose. Jean François, I must get my son away at any cost."

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Marie Bastien and her guide left the farmhouse they found that the fog had lifted, and that the moon was shining brightly.

A profound silence reigned.

Jean François strode on for a moment or two in silence, then, moderating his pace, he turned and said:

"Pardon, me, madame, I am going too fast, perhaps."

"Too fast? Oh, no, my friend, you cannot go too fast. Go on, go on, I can keep up with you."

Then, after they had walked a few minutes longer in silence, Marie asked:

"When you saw my son, did he seem excited or agitated?" And as the farmer turned to reply, Madame Bastien exclaimed:

"Don't lose a minute, talk as we walk."

"I can hardly say, madame. I saw him come out of the forest, run across the road, and enter a thicket which he had probably selected as a hiding-place."

"And you think you would know this thicket?"

"Unquestionably, madame. It is only about ten rods from the sign-post on the main road to the château."

"What a distance it is, Jean François! Shall we never get there?"

"It will take a quarter of an hour longer."

"A quarter of an hour!" murmured the young mother. "Alas! so many things may happen in a quarter of an hour."

Madame Bastien and her guide hurried on, though more than once the young woman was obliged to press

both hands upon her breast to still the violent throbbing of her heart.

"What time do you think it is, Jean François?" she asked a few minutes afterward.

"Judging from the moon, I think it must be about seven o'clock."

"And when we reach the edge of the forest we are near the thicket, you say?"

"Not more than a hundred yards at most, madame."

"You had better enter one side of the thicket, Jean François, and I will enter the other, and we will both call Frederick at the top of our voices. If he does not answer us," continued the young woman with an involuntary shudder, "if he does not answer us, we shall be obliged to continue our search, for we must not fail to find him."

"Certainly, madame, but if you will take my advice you will not call M. Frederick."

"But why not?"

"We might give warning to the gamekeepers who are probably on the watch, for a bright moonlight night like this seems to have been made expressly for poachers."

"You are right. But do you hear that?" she exclaimed, pausing and listening attentively. "It sounds like the ring of horse's hoofs."

"It is, madame. It may be that the head gamekeeper is making his rounds. Now we have reached the edge of the forest, madame, we will take this short cut, for it will take us straight to the guide-post, only look out for your face, for there are so many holly-bushes."

And more than once Marie's delicate hands were torn and lacerated by the sharp points of the holly-leaves, but she was not even conscious of it.

"Those bullets, why did he want those bullets?" she said to herself. "But I will not allow myself to think of it. I should die of terror, and I need all my strength."

Just then the sound of horse's hoofs, which had seemed to come from a long way off, rang out louder and louder, then ceased entirely, as if the animal had paused entirely or settled down into a walk to ascend a very steep hill.

"It was only about twenty yards from here on the top of the hill that I saw M. Frederick enter that thicket on the edge of the road," said the farmer, pointing to a large clump of young oaks. "I will go around on the other side of the thicket, you can enter it on this side, so we cannot fail to find M. Frederick if he is still there. In case I meet him before you do, I shall tell him that you want him to give up his poaching at once, sha'n't I, madame?"

Marie nodded her assent, and entered the little grove in an agony of suspense, while Jean François hurried on.

The horse was now near enough to the top of the hill for his tread to be distinctly heard, though he was moving so slowly, and in another instant horse and rider both became distinctly visible in the bright moonlight. The rider was Raoul de Pont Brillant, who had been obliged to take this route after leaving the Vieille Coupe road.

Frederick, who was familiar with every path and road in the forest, had, by making a short cut through the woods, reached the top of the hill considerably in advance of the young marquis.

Marie soon reached quite a large clearing that extended to the roadside. Near the edge of this clearing stood an immense oak, and the thick moss that covered the ground beneath it deadened the sound of any footsteps so effectually that the young woman was able to approach without attracting the attention of her son, whom she saw half hidden by the enormous trunk of the tree. Too deeply absorbed to notice his mother's approach, Frederick was kneeling bareheaded on the grass, holding his gun half lowered as if confident that the

moment to raise it to his shoulder and fire was close at hand.

Though she had endeavoured to drive away the terrible thought, there had been a strong fear of the possibility of suicide, so it is easy to imagine Madame Bastien's intense joy and relief when, from her son's posture, she concluded that the farmer's suspicions were justified and that her son was merely poaching on his neighbour's preserves; so, in a wild transport of tenderness and delight, the young mother sprang forward and threw her arms around her son at the very instant he brought his gun to his shoulder, muttering the while, in a ferocious tone:

"Ah, M. le marquis, I have you now."

For Frederick had just seen Raoul de Pont Brillant slowly advancing toward him through the clear moonlight, lazily whistling a hunting song.

Madame Bastien's movement had been so sudden and so impetuous that her son's gun fell from his hands at the instant he was about to fire.

"My mother!" murmured Frederick, petrified with astonishment.

The horse's tread and the hunting song Raoul de Pont Brillant was whistling had partially deadened the noise Madame Bastien had made. Nevertheless, the young marquis seemed to have heard or seen something that had excited his suspicions, for, standing up in his stirrups, he called out, imperiously, "Who goes there!" then listened attentively again.

Marie, who had just discovered the reason of her son's presence in the forest, placed her hand over Frederick's mouth and listened breathlessly.

Receiving no response after waiting several seconds, and not supposing for one moment that his unknown enemy could have gotten here in advance of him, Raoul settled himself in his saddle again, saying to himself: "It was some startled deer leaping through the bushes;"

after which the mother and son, silent, motionless, and locked in a firm embrace, heard the young man begin to whistle his hunting song again.

The sound grew fainter and fainter until it died away altogether in the profound silence that pervaded the forest.

CHAPTER XVI.

MADAME BASTIEN could no longer doubt Frederick's intentions, for she had seen him aim at Raoul de Pont Brillant, at the same time exclaiming, "I have you now, M. le marquis;" but this ambuscade seemed so cowardly and so atrocious to the unfortunate woman that, in spite of the conclusive evidence against her son, she still tried to close her eyes to the truth.

"Frederick, my child, what are you doing here?" asked Madame Bastien, tremulously.

"You do not answer me, my child," she continued. "Your eyes are haggard, you look so strangely. You have been suffering so much for some days past that it has brought on a sort of nervous fever. The fact that you do not even know where you are or how you come to be here is proof of that. You are like one who has just been suddenly awakened from a dream. Am I not right, Frederick?"

"I know where I am."

"Yes, you do now, but you did not a moment ago."

"On the contrary, I tell you that I do know perfectly well why I am hiding here with my gun."

"Then Jean François was right," said the poor mother, pretending to be reassured. "What he told me was true."

"What did he tell you?"

"That you were poaching in the Pont Brillant woods. You can judge of my anxiety when I heard that, so I hastened here at once with Jean François, for it is

frightfully imprudent in you, my poor child. Don't you know that M. le marquis — "

The words M. le marquis startled Frederick out of his terrible calmness. He clenched his fists furiously and, confronting his mother with a ferocious expression upon his face, exclaimed:

"It was M. le marquis I was lying in wait for; do you hear me, mother?"

"No, Frederick, no," replied the poor mother, shuddering.

"I am determined to make myself understood, then," said Frederick, with a frightful smile. "Knowing that M. le marquis would pass here about nightfall on his way home, I loaded my gun and came and concealed myself behind this tree to kill M. le marquis as he passed. Do you understand me now, mother?"

On hearing this terrible confession, Madame Bastien's brain reeled for a moment; then she showed herself to be truly heroic.

Placing one of her hands on her son's shoulder, she laid the other on his forehead, saying in a calm, perfectly calm, voice, and as if talking to herself:

"How hot his poor head is, and he is still delirious with fever! My God, oh, my God, how can I induce him to follow me?"

Frederick, amazed by his mother's words and her apparent tranquillity after the terrible confession he had just made, exclaimed:

"I am perfectly sane, I tell you, mother. It is you as much as myself that I wish to avenge, and my hatred, you see — "

"Yes, yes, my child, I know," interrupted Madame Bastien, too much terrified to notice Frederick's last words.

Then, kissing him on the forehead, she said, soothingly:

"Yes, yes, of course you have your senses, so come

home with me; for it is getting late and we have been out in these woods a long time."

"The place suits me well enough and I shall come back again," answered Frederick, sullenly.

"Of course we will come back again, my child, but in order to do that we shall first have to go away."

"Don't exasperate me too much, mother."

"Hush, hush, I implore you," whispered Marie, placing her hand upon her son's lips and listening breathlessly. "Don't you hear footsteps? My God, who is coming?"

Frederick caught up his gun.

"Ah, I know," murmured his mother, recovering from her alarm, after a moment's reflection, "it is Jean François. He was to search for you in one side of the grove while I searched in the other."

"Is that you, Jean François?" she called out, cautiously.

"Yes, Madame Bastien," replied the worthy farmer, who was not yet visible but who could be distinctly heard forcing his way through the branches. "I did not find M. Frederick."

"My son is here, Jean François."

"I am glad of it, Madame Bastien, for I just heard voices over by the lake and think some of the gamekeepers must be making their rounds," said the worthy farmer, stepping into the clearing.

Frederick, in spite of the violence of his animosity, dared not repeat the threats he had just uttered before his mother, so, taking his gun under his arm, he silently and gloomily prepared to follow Madame Bastien.

On reaching the farmer's cottage that worthy man insisted upon harnessing his horse to his cart and taking Marie and her son home, and she accepted his offer, being too much overcome with fatigue and emotion to be capable of walking such a distance.

They had reached home about nine o'clock in the

evening and Frederick had scarcely entered the house before he tottered and fell unconscious upon the floor. This swoon was followed by a severe nervous spasm which terrified his mother beyond expression, but with old Marguerite's assistance she did everything she could for her son, who was carried into his own room and put to bed.

During this nervous spasm, though his eyes were closed, Frederick wept bitterly, and when he recovered consciousness and saw his mother leaning over him he held out his arms and pressed her tenderly to his breast. This crisis over, he seemed much more calm, and, remarking that he chiefly needed rest and quiet now, he turned his face toward the wall and did not utter another word.

With rare presence of mind, Marie had ordered all the outside shutters of her son's room closed before he was taken into it. There was no way of reaching the room except through hers, where she intended to watch all night, with the communicating door slightly ajar.

She was not one of those persons who are paralysed by misfortune. Terrible as the discovery she had just made was, as soon as she was alone she faced it resolutely, after vainly endeavouring to persuade herself that her son had not been sane when he premeditated such an execrable crime.

"I can no longer doubt that Frederick hates the young marquis with a mortal hatred," she said to herself, "and this long suppressed animosity is undoubtedly the cause of the great change which has taken place in him during the last few months. This hatred has attained such an intensity that my son, after having attempted to kill M. de Pont Brillant, cannot be induced to abandon that horrible idea even now. These are unquestionably the facts of the case. Now to what mysterious circumstance am I to impute the origin and the development of such a deadly animosity against a youth of his own age? How

is it that my son, who has been so carefully reared, and who has heretofore made me the proudest and happiest of mothers, can have conceived such a horrible idea? All this is of secondary importance, so I will postpone the solution of these questions which puzzle my reason and make me doubt myself until some later day. What I must do now and without delay is to save my son from this terrible temptation, and thus prevent him from committing a murder."

And after having satisfied herself that her son was sleeping quietly, she seated herself at a table and wrote the following letter to her husband:

"To M. Bastien: — I wrote you only a few days ago in relation to Frederick's poor health and to the departure of the tutor you had authorised me to employ.

"My son's condition causes me great uneasiness, and I realise the urgent necessity of taking some decided action in the matter.

"I consulted our friend, Doctor Dufour, again yesterday. He feels certain that Frederick's age and rapid growth is the cause of his nervous and morbid condition, and advises me to divert his mind from himself as much as possible, or, better still, travel with him.

"This I am anxious to do, as in the seclusion in which we live it is almost impossible for me to give Frederick any diversion.

"It is hardly probable that your business will allow you to accompany us to Hyères, where I wish to take my son, but Marguerite will accompany us, and we may be absent five or six months, or a much shorter time, as that will depend upon the improvement in Frederick's health.

"For reasons which it would take too long to enumerate here, I have fixed upon next Monday as the date of my departure. I would have started to-morrow morning if I had had the necessary amount of money, but

the small sum you sent me last month has been used for household expenses, and you know I have no other money.

"I send this letter to Blois by a messenger, so you will receive it day after to-morrow, and I implore you to answer by return mail, enclosing a draft on your banker in Blois. I have no idea what amount you will consider adequate. You know the simplicity of my habits. Calculate the amount that will be needed to transport us to Hyères by diligence, add to that the trifling expenses that cannot be exactly foreseen, and sufficient money to live upon for a short time. We will establish ourselves in the most economical manner, and I will afterward write you exactly how much it will cost us a month.

"Stress of business often prevents you from replying to my letters promptly or even at all, but you must realise the importance of this letter too much to permit any delay in this instance.

"I do not wish to alarm you, but I feel it my duty to tell you that Frederick shows symptoms of so grave a nature that this journey may, and I hope will, be the salvation of my son.

"I think I must have given you during the last seventeen years sufficient proofs of my strength of character and devoted affection for Frederick for you to feel satisfied that, sudden as this resolution on my part may appear to you, you will do everything in your power to aid me in carrying out a resolution dictated by the most urgent and imperative necessity.

"I shall leave old André here. He will take charge of the house, and perform any service you may require during your visits. He is a trusty man to whom I can safely confide the charge of everything in my absence.

"Good-bye. I end my letter rather abruptly so it can be mailed this evening.

"I hope to receive a reply on Monday, in which case

I shall take the diligence that same evening for Paris, where we shall remain only twenty-four hours, and then leave for Lyons on our way southward.

"Once more adieu.

"MARIE BASTIEN."

Her letter concluded, Madame Bastien ordered the horse harnessed so the letter could be taken to Blois at once.

After satisfying herself several times in regard to the condition of her son, who seemed to be resting more quietly, Madame Bastien sat down and began to reflect upon the determination to travel that she had just announced to her husband, and found it more and more opportune, though she asked herself anxiously how she should manage to prevent Frederick from getting out of her sight for a moment until the time appointed for their departure. The little clock on the mantel had just struck twelve, and the young mother was still absorbed in the same sorrowful reflections, when she fancied she heard the quick ring of a horse's hoofs in the distance, and the sound came nearer and nearer, until the animal paused at the door of the farmhouse.

A few minutes afterward an unwonted bustle pervaded the dwelling and some one rapped at the door of Madame Bastien's chamber.

"Who is there?" she asked.

"I, Marguerite, madame."

"What do you want?"

"Doctor Dufour is here, madame. He just arrived on horseback."

"Light a fire in the sitting-room and ask the doctor to wait for me there. I will be down in a moment."

Then, recollecting that she would be obliged to leave her son, Madame Bastien recalled the servant, and said:

"I have changed my mind. I will see the doctor here in my room. Show him up at once."

Almost immediately the doctor appeared, preceded by Marguerite.

"Good Heavens! what is the matter with you?" exclaimed M. Dufour on seeing Marie.

"Nothing, doctor —"

"Nothing!" repeated the physician, scrutinising Marie with evident surprise, so terrible was the change which the events of the previous evening had wrought in her appearance. "Nothing?"

"Ah, yes, I know," replied Madame Bastien, with a heart-broken smile, reading the doctor's thoughts from the expression of his face.

Then placing a finger on her lips, she added, in a low tone, with a meaning glance toward the door of Frederick's chamber:

"We must be very careful, my dear doctor, my son is in there asleep. He has had a terrible experience this evening. I was about to write to you and ask you to come to-morrow. It was Heaven that sent you."

"As my coming seems so opportune, I shall not have to apologise for coming at such an unseasonable hour. I wished to talk with you about a matter that would brook no delay, so I ventured to come almost in the middle of the night and at the risk of disturbing you."

"My God! what is it?"

"Your son is asleep, is he not?"

"I think so."

"But he might hear us if he is not, so let us go to the other end of the room and speak low, for it is a matter that concerns him."

CHAPTER XVII.

"I WISH to speak to you in regard to the mental and physical change which you have noticed in your son, and which is giving you such grave uneasiness."

"Grave indeed, doctor."

"There is a possibility of curing him, I think."

"You really think you can, my dear doctor."

"I? No."

"What do you mean?"

"Have the goodness to read this, madame," said the doctor, drawing a letter from his pocket and handing it to Madame Bastien, who, greatly astonished, took it, and read as follows:

"'MY DEAR PIERRE: — The diligence stops here for an hour and I take advantage of the opportunity thus afforded to write to you.

"'After leaving you last evening the subject of our last conversation engrossed my thoughts to the exclusion of all other subjects, for what I had seen and heard could not fail to make a deep impression upon me.

"'Last night, and this morning as well, I have been unable to drive that poor boy of Madame Bastien's out of my mind. You know, Pierre, that I am rarely deceived in the deductions I draw from certain physiognomies, and what I saw yesterday and what occurred during the passing of the hunting party alike convince me that Madame Bastien's son feels a deadly hatred for the young Marquis de Pont Brillant.'"

Marie, astonished by the justice of this observation, and overcome by her recollection of the terrors of the

evening, buried her face in her hands, and began to sob wildly.

"Great Heavens! what is the matter?" cried the doctor.

"Ah, that is only too true. It is hatred, an implacable hatred, that he feels. But who wrote this letter?"

"My best friend, the most generous and noble-hearted man in the world. You remember meeting a stranger at my house on St. Hubert's Day, do you not?"

"The gentleman my son treated so rudely?"

"The same; but pray go on with the letter."

"'I have not endeavoured to discover the cause of this animosity, but daily association with Frederick would undoubtedly enable a patient and sagacious person to make a discovery which is indispensable if he would effect a cure. Confident that an implacable animosity has already taken deep root in Frederick's heart, I ask myself by what strange anomaly he can be a prey to such a deplorable weakness.'"

"But who is this man who seems to know my son better than I do myself, — this man whose penetration frightens me; for it has proved more correct, much more correct than you suppose."

"This man," replied the doctor, sadly, "is a man who has suffered much, seen much, and observed much. That is the secret of his remarkable penetration."

Madame Bastien resumed her reading of the letter.

"'You have told me, my friend, that Frederick has arrived at what you call the transition period, an epoch of life which is often extremely critical and accompanied with grave physical disturbances.

"'Frederick may be strongly affected by these conditions and consequently a prey to feelings which are the

more powerful by reason of their very novelty, on account of his mother's close supervision and the salutary influence she has exerted over him up to this time. And how could even Madame Bastien's affection and prudence guard against a danger which neither she nor her son apprehended? She must have been quite as unprepared as her son for the violent passion which seems to have taken possession of him. No, even this judicious and devoted mother has no more cause for regret than if her child had been attacked with measles or some other childish disease.'"

"Don't you entirely agree with my friend in this?" inquired the doctor, "I mean in relation to not blaming yourself for the present state of affairs."

"Yes," replied Madame Bastien, thoughtfully, "I shall show no mock modesty with you, my dear doctor. I am conscious of having performed my duties as a mother to the very best of my ability, and I recognise the fact that it was not within the limits of human possibility for any one to foresee or prevent the misfortune which has overtaken my son."

"One word more, my dear doctor," continued Marie, after a moment's silence. "Your friend saw Frederick for only a few minutes, but long enough, alas! to be treated with inexcusable rudeness. A generous-minded person feels only indulgence and compassion for a poor sick child, I know, but there is a wide difference between this compassion and the profound interest which your friend manifests in Frederick. What has my son done to deserve this interest?"

"The latter part of this letter will explain, I think, but I will say this much by way of explanation. My friend had a brother very much younger than himself, of whom he had entire charge after his father's death. My friend idolised this brother, who was about Frederick's age. Like him, he was extremely handsome; like him,

he was passionately loved, not by a mother, but by the tenderest of brothers."

"And what became of him?" inquired Marie, with interest.

"My friend lost this brother six years ago."

"Ah, now I understand," cried Marie, deeply moved. Then even more thoughtfully she resumed the reading of the letter:

"'I am almost positive that Frederick has never evinced any lack of confidence in his mother up to this time because he has had nothing to hide from her, but the more reprehensible the secret he is concealing from his mother is now at this present time, the more impenetrable he is likely to be.

"'But now the malady is known to us, what are the best means or the chances of a cure?

"'The first thing to be done is to discover the cause of Frederick's animosity. How is this discovery to be effected? Frederick loves his mother devotedly, nevertheless he has remained deaf to her entreaties, so it is almost certain that he will never tell her his unhappy secret now, partly from a fear of forfeiting the respect of his friends, partly from a fear of imperilling his prospect of vengeance, the inevitable consequence of hatred when it is as energetic and intense as Frederick's seems to be.'"

Madame Bastien trembled violently as she read this prophecy which the scene she had lately witnessed in the forest verified but too well, and it was in a voice full of emotion she continued:

"'Consequently it seems almost certain that Madame Bastien must renounce all hope of gaining her son's confidence. That being the case, shall she resort to penetration, that compound of watchfulness, dissimulation, and trickery? for to ferret out a secret, at least

a jealously guarded secret, one must employ all sorts of cunning expedients.

"'Can a woman like Madame Bastien play such a difficult rôle even if she desire to do so, a rôle which requires so much cool calculation and dissimulation?

"'No, the poor mother would blush and pale by turn, and in spite of her resolution she would hesitate at every step, even though she felt such a course might effect her son's salvation.'"

Madame Bastien's head drooped, two big tears rolled slowly down her cheeks, her hands fell inertly upon her knees, and she murmured, with a deep sigh:

"What he says is only too true. I recognise my utter powerlessness."

"Don't despair, I beseech you," cried the doctor, earnestly. "Do you suppose I would ever have brought you this letter, or that my friend would ever have written it, if he had not felt sure he had found a means of remedying this evil? Go on, I beg of you."

"'In my opinion,'" Marie continued, "'Frederick has reached an age when the most devoted and intelligent maternal tenderness will no longer suffice for his guidance.

"'Some knowledge of and experience in a man's life is needed to arm him against the many temptations of which a woman is entirely ignorant, and against which it is consequently well-nigh impossible for her to protect her son.

"'An intelligent and devoted father might accomplish this difficult task successfully, but as M. Bastien's business keeps him so much from home, Frederick needs a man of feeling, honour, integrity, and experience, — a man who understands the full importance of the task of fashioning a youth into a man.

"'Such a person, aided by the information Madame

Bastien could give him, and, above all, by the influence she must still possess over her son, such a person could, I feel sure, by patient study and observation eventually discover Frederick's secret, and assist his mother in combating and finally destroying this animosity in the heart of this unfortunate youth, and then continue the education which Madame Bastien has so admirably begun.' "

"This is only too true," commented Madame Bastien. "I have felt the necessity of providing a tutor for my son for some time, as you know, my dear doctor. The tutor I engaged did not fulfil all my requirements by any means, but he was fairly competent, and endowed with an unusual amount of patience and amiability. Unfortunately, my son's irascibility of temper drove him away. Now, in the seclusion in which I live, and for the very limited amount of money my husband has consented to expend for this purpose, how can I hope to find such a tutor as your friend describes? Besides, how can I induce Frederick to accept a tutor in his present irritated state of mind? Besides, the more conscious a tutor is of his value, his devotion, and his dignity, the less inclined he will be to submit to my son's violence. Alas! you see I shall be obliged to renounce this means, valuable as I know it to be."

The young mother resumed her reading.

"'If Madame Bastien for any special reason does not desire to employ a tutor, there is another course which may not prove equally beneficial, but which will at least serve to divert his mind from the idea which seems to be dominating it, — that is for his mother to start with him on a long journey.' "

"I had made up my mind to do that very thing," said Marie. "This very evening I wrote to my husband informing him of my decision. I cannot be

wrong this time, as I agree with your friend on this point, so — "

"Yes, but in my friend's opinion, as you will see if you read on a little further, this journey is only a palliative measure."

Madame Bastien read as follows:

"'I do not doubt the beneficial effects of such a journey on Frederick's mind, but unhappily it will only divert his mind from this unfortunate idea, not destroy it. A journey may, I repeat, serve to ameliorate Frederick's mental condition and enable his mother to gain time, a very important consideration, for I know there will necessarily be considerable difficulty in immediately finding a person capable of undertaking this mission. In fact, I am so conscious of the many difficulties that, if I thought my offer would be acceptable and above all seemly, I should be glad to offer myself to Madame Bastien as Frederick's tutor.' "

Marie's astonishment was so intense that she paused suddenly, and thinking she could not have read the letter aright, she read the line over again aloud in order to satisfy herself that her eyes had not played her false.

"'*I should be glad to offer myself to Madame Bastien as Frederick's tutor.*' "

"Yes," said the doctor, "and if he says it he means it."

"Pardon me, doctor," stammered the young mother, overwhelmed with astonishment, "but the amazement this — this unexpected, incomprehensible offer causes me — "

"Incomprehensible, no. When you know the person who makes this offer better, you are the very person to understand and appreciate the feeling that prompted it."

"But without knowing me, doctor—"

"In the first place he does know you, for I admitted, did I not? that I had been very indiscreet; besides, would any other tutor that offered himself be any better acquainted with you?"

"But—but your friend has never been a tutor?"

"No; yet from his letter can you not see that he is a just, generous, and judicious person? As to his capabilities, I can vouch for them. But read on, please."

"'This proposition will doubtless astonish you, my dear friend, as I left you last evening for Nantes, from which place I was to embark for a long voyage. Moreover, I have never been a tutor, the modest fortune at my disposal preventing the necessity of following any regular avocation; last but not least, Madame Bastien does not know me, though I ask her to give me the greatest proof of confidence that it is in her power to grant, that is, to allow me to share the oversight of Frederick with her.

"'The first moment of surprise over, my friend, you will recollect that, though I have endeavoured to impart a useful aim to my travels, I adopted this roving life in the hope of finding distraction from the intense grief the loss of my poor brother caused me. Now after several hours of reflection, I am not only willing but anxious to attempt Frederick's cure. A very extraordinary desire this will doubtless appear to those who do not know me, but perfectly natural to those who do know me intimately. Since Fernand's death all boys of his age inspire me with a profound interest; and since I have reflected long and carefully upon the seriousness of Frederick's mental condition and his mother's increasing anxiety, as well as the obstacles she must overcome in order to ensure her son's recovery, I think I have devised a way of effecting a cure. It seems to me, too, that I should be paying the greatest possible tribute of affec-

tion and respect to my poor Fernand's memory by doing for Frederick precisely what I had hoped to do for my own brother, and that this would not only be a wholesome distraction, but the only possible consolation in my grief.

"'Now you have heard my reasons I feel sure my decision will no longer astonish you; and if my offer is accepted I shall fulfil my duties conscientiously.

"'From what I know of Madame Bastien, I feel sure that she will understand my motives perfectly; so, on reflection, I think it would be advisable for you to show her this letter, though it was really written for your eye alone. You are in a position to answer any inquiries Madame Bastien may desire to make concerning me. You know me and my life; so say whatever you think you are justified in saying to satisfy Madame Bastien that I am worthy of her confidence.

"'Write me at Nantes. It is absolutely necessary that I should have an answer this day week, as the *Endymion*, on which I have engaged passage, sails on the fourteenth, wind permitting; so desiring to give Madame Bastien the longest possible time for reflection, I seize this opportunity to write so my letter may reach you twenty-four hours earlier.

"'If my offer is refused I shall take my intended journey.

"'The diligence is about to start, so I must bid you a hasty farewell, my dear Pierre. I have only time to address this letter and assure you once more of my devoted affection.

"'HENRI DAVID.'"

CHAPTER XVIII.

As Madame Bastien returned the letter with a hand that trembled with emotion, Doctor Dufour said:

"One word, please. I do not know what your decision may be, but before you announce it I ought to give you some information about Henri David, so you may know all about him before you either accept or refuse his offer. Do you not think so?"

"No, my dear doctor, I do not," replied Madame Bastien, after a moment's reflection.

"What?"

"I shall be obliged to do one of two things, that is to say, I shall either have to accept or decline M. David's offer. If I accept it, a desire to know anything further in relation to him would show a distrust of him and of you. This letter is to my mind convincing proof of his high sense of honour and his generosity of heart. If, on the contrary, I cannot or should not accept M. David's offer, there would be a sort of indelicate curiosity on my part in encouraging your revelations concerning the past of a person who would remain a stranger to me, though the nobility of his offer merits my eternal gratitude."

"I thank you both on David's behalf and my own for the confidence you manifest in us, my dear Madame Bastien. Now reflect, and let me know your decision as soon as your mind is fully made up. In compliance with my friend's request, I lost no time in acquainting you with the contents of his letter, and that is why I came at this late hour of the night, even at the risk of

disturbing you, instead of waiting until to-morrow, and — "

The doctor did not finish the sentence, for a shrill, spasmodic laugh resounded from Frederick's room, and made Madame Bastien spring from her seat.

Pale and terrified, she seized the lamp and ran into her son's room, followed by the doctor.

The unfortunate youth, with distorted features, livid complexion, and lips contracted in a sardonic smile, had been seized with a fit of delirium, due, doubtless, to a reaction after the events of the evening, and his frenzied outburst of laughter was followed by incoherent exclamations, in which the following recurred incessantly:

" I missed him, but patience, patience! "

These words, which were only too significant to Madame Bastien, showed how persistently the idea of vengeance still clung to Frederick. Thanks to Doctor Dufour's almost providential presence, the promptest and most efficacious attentions were lavished upon Frederick, and the physician spent the remainder of the night and the morning of the next day with the sick youth. Toward evening there was a decided change for the better in his condition. The delirium ceased, and it was with unusual effusiveness that the poor boy thanked his mother for her devotion, weeping freely the while.

Madame Bastien's relief was so great that she deluded herself with the idea that the violence of this crisis had effected a salutary change in the condition of her son's mind, and that he was saved, so about ten o'clock in the evening she yielded to the doctor's persuasions, and consented to lie down and rest while old Marguerite watched over her son.

When she returned to her son's bedside she found him sleeping soundly, so motioning Marguerite to follow her, she asked:

" Has he rested well? "

"Very well, madame. He woke only twice, and talked very sensibly, I assure you."

"What did he say?"

"Oh, he talked about different things. Among others he asked me where his gun was, and when I told him madame had made me put it away, he said: 'That's all right, Marguerite, but don't tell my mother I've been asking for my gun. It might worry her if she thought I had any idea of hunting again, weak as I am.'"

So he had hardly recovered from this attack before Frederick's mind was again engrossed with thoughts of vengeance. Marie had only just made this deplorable discovery when a letter was handed to her. Madame Bastien recognised her husband's handwriting, consequently this was the reply to the letter in which she had announced her intention of travelling with Frederick.

"BOURGES, November 5, 1846.

"I answer by return mail as you request, to ask, first, if you have gone mad, and, secondly, if you really think me ass enough to accede to the most absurd whim that ever visited a woman's brain.

"So, madame, on the plea that Frederick's health requires it, you are planning a pleasure trip to the sunny south with your retinue like some great lady! It strikes me that you have taken it into your head to play the part of a woman rather late in the day!

"'We shall remain in Paris only twenty-four hours at the longest,' you say, but I see through your little game.

"You are dying to see the capital, like all provincials, and your excuse would be a pretty good one if I was such an egregious fool as you seem to think. Once in Paris, you would write: My son is too much fatigued with the journey to go on at once, or, we could secure no places in the diligence, or, I am not feeling well myself, until a week or two weeks or even a month had passed.

"If monsieur, my son, needs diversion on account of his health, send him out fishing, — he has three ponds at his disposal, — or let him go hunting. If he needs change, let him walk from Herbiers to the Grand Pré mill half a dozen times a day, and I'll wager that in three months he'll be strong enough to make the journey from Pont Brillant to Hyères on foot.

"You excite my pity, upon my word! To have such absurd ideas at your age, think of it, and, above all, to suppose me capable of consenting to anything so ridiculous!

"All this confirms me in the opinion that you are bringing up your son to be a perfect nincompoop. I shall hear of his having the blues and nervous attacks next, I suppose. He'll soon get over all this nonsense when I take him in hand, I promise you. I consented to leave him with you until he was seventeen, and even to let him have a tutor, as if he were a young duke or a marquis. I shall keep my word, so you can have your son and a tutor exactly five months longer, after which M. Frederick will enter the office of my friend Bridou, the notary, where he will stain his slender white fingers copying documents as his father and grandfather did before him.

"I write to my banker in Blois by this same mail, telling him not to advance you a centime. I shall also write to my friend Bossard, the notary at Pont Brillant, who is as good as a town crier, to proclaim it from the housetops that, in case you try to borrow any money, no one is to loan you a sou, for any debts contracted by a wife without the husband's consent, or rather when he has given due notice that he has no intention of paying them, are null and void.

"Besides, I warn you that I shall instruct Bridou, in case you have the audacity to undertake this journey on borrowed money, to set the police on your track and bring you back to the conjugal domicile, as I have an

undoubted right to do, for no wife can leave her husband's roof without the consent of her lord and master. You know me too well to fancy for one moment that I shall hesitate to carry my threat into execution. You have a will of your own, as you have proved. Very well, you will find that I have one, too.

"Don't take the trouble to answer this letter. I leave Bourges this evening for the Netherlands, where I shall probably remain until the middle of January, returning to the farm in March, to give you and my son the blowing up you so richly deserve.

"It is in this hope that I sign myself your deeply incensed husband,

"BASTIEN.

"P. S. — You wrote me in a previous letter that the tutor had taken his departure. If you want another ass to take the place of the one that has gone, you can employ one, provided you can get him for one hundred francs a month, board and lodging — but no washing — included. Above all, don't forget that I won't have him eating at the table with me. When I am at home he will eat in his room, or in the kitchen if he wants company.

"Ask Huebin to let me know how the brood sows are looking, for I want to get the premium for my hogs this fall. It is a matter of pride with me."

A quarter of an hour after this coarse effusion from her lord and master had been received, Madame Bastien wrote the following letters, which were despatched to Pont Brillant at once.

"To DOCTOR DUFOUR: — Dear doctor, will you have the goodness to forward the enclosed letter to Nantes, after having first read and sealed it. My son had a comfortable night.

"Try to give me a few minutes to-day or to-morrow, so I can tell you what I have not time to write.

"Hoping to see you very soon, I remain,

"Your sincere friend,

"MARIE BASTIEN."

The letter enclosed read as follows:

"MONSIEUR: — I accept your generous offer with profound gratitude. My son's age and mental condition, the anxiety I feel concerning his future are my only claims upon your interest, yet I believe that in your eyes these claims are sacred.

"Increase my obligations by hastening the date of your arrival here as much as possible. Your predictions in relation to my unfortunate child are more than verified.

"My only hope is in you, monsieur, and every hour and minute adds to my anxiety. I am terrified at the thought of what may occur at any moment in spite of my solicitude and untiring vigilance. It is needless to say that I await your assistance with the utmost impatience.

"May Heaven bless you, for the compassion you have shown to a mother who lives only in her son.

"MARIE BASTIEN."

CHAPTER XIX.

DURING the brief time which preceded Henri David's arrival the condition of physical weakness which followed Frederick's attack of nervous fever prevented him from leaving the house, especially as the weather was very unpleasant, an unusually early snow having covered the ground, while a heavy fog obscured the atmosphere.

Since the scene in the forest there had been no explanation between the mother and son, nor even any allusion to the distressing incident. Remembering the offensive manner in which her son had treated M. David on Saint Hubert's Day, Madame Bastien felt no little anxiety with regard to the future relations between her son and his new tutor, whose intended coming was as yet a secret to Frederick.

At last came a note from Doctor Dufour, enclosing the following:

"I am travelling by post to make a few hours, my dear Pierre, so I shall arrive very soon after you receive these few lines, and we will go together to Madame Bastien's house."

M. David's arrival being only a matter of a few hours, Marie could defer the revelation of her plans no longer, so she went to the study in search of him. She found him seated at a table, apparently engaged in translating a French exercise into English.

"Lay aside your books a moment, Frederick, and come and sit down by me. There is something I wish to say to you."

Frederick took a seat beside his mother on a sofa near the fireplace, and his mother, taking her son's hands in hers, said to him, with the tenderest solicitude:

"How cold your hands are, my son. Your writing-table is too far from the fire. You ought to move your table to this part of the room."

"I will, mother, if you wish it."

"I wish you would do so presently, but first we must have a little talk."

"About what?"

"About a very important matter, my son."

"I am listening."

"The reasons that decided me to employ a tutor for you still exist, though he has left us. There are branches in which you need instruction which I am unfortunately not able to give."

"I seem to have lost all taste for study now, you know, mother."

"You must make some effort to overcome this languor. It worries me very much."

"I will try, mother."

"But it seems to me that if you had some one to encourage you in your good resolutions, and assist your studies, it would be much better for you, don't you think so?"

"Your encouragement suffices for me."

"I may encourage you, but as I said before, I am unable to render you any assistance, so I have thought it would be advisable to replace the tutor who just left us."

"Replace him? It is not worth while to think of that, mother. I don't want any tutor."

"But you need one, nevertheless, so I have engaged a new one for you."

"You must be joking, mother."

"You and I seem to have gotten sadly out of the habit of jesting, my dear boy. The jolly times you

and I used to have together seem almost like a dream when I think of them now. But to return to the subject I was speaking of. Your new tutor will probably arrive — "

"Arrive! When?"

"To-day."

Frederick's face turned scarlet, and, springing up abruptly, he stamped angrily upon the floor, exclaiming:

"I will not have any tutor, mother; do you hear me?"

"But listen, my child, I beg of you."

"I will not have a tutor, I tell you. Send him away; it is useless to take him. I will serve him exactly as I did the other."

Up to this time Madame Bastien's manner toward her son had always been tender, almost entreating, but realising that she must show no weakness now, she replied, in a firm though affectionate tone:

"I have decided that it will be for your interest to have a tutor, my son, so I feel sure you will respect my wishes."

"You will see if I do."

"If you mean by that, that you hope to wear your new tutor out by your obstinacy and ill-temper, you will make a great mistake; first, because you will grieve me very much, and, secondly, because M. David, for that is his name, is not a person who will be easily disheartened. This is sufficiently proven by the fact that your anger and impertinence only served to arouse his commiseration."

"What do you mean? Who are you talking about?"

"The gentleman you met at Doctor Dufour's house."

"What! that man — "

"Is the tutor I have selected for you."

"Is that so?" responded Frederick, with a bitter smile. "After all, what difference does it make? I had just as soon contend with one as with the other."

Though convinced that Henri David was fully prepared for all the tribulations of the difficult task he wished to undertake, Marie was naturally desirous of sparing the generous-hearted man an ungracious reception, so she resolved to appeal to her son's affection, which had never failed her heretofore.

"My dear son, I feel sure of being understood when I tell you that it is in the name of my tenderness and devotion for you that I implore you to treat M. David with the respectful deference due to his character and merits. That is all I ask. Affection and confidence are sure to come later. But if you do not treat him as you ought, I shall think, yes, I shall think that you have ceased to love me, Frederick. You make no reply. I understand why, my son. You think I am exaggerating, do you not, when I say that I shall think you have ceased to love me if you treat your new tutor rudely? But, my son, the coming of this new tutor means your salvation and mine, for I truly believe it will prove the beginning of a new era of hope and happiness for us both, and that being the case, you would not grieve and disappoint me by receiving M. David rudely, for no son who loved his mother would wish to make me miserable; so you see I do not exaggerate, after all, my child. But, Frederick, you turn away your head. You refuse to look at me. What I say about your having ceased to love me is true, then! You do not say so much as a word to reassure me, you who used to be so loving and affectionate. Why are you angry with me? What have I done?"

"You feel better now, doubtless, since you have summoned a stranger to your aid, mother."

"What else could I do? Be just, I beg of you. What am I to think when I see you utterly unmoved by all I say to you? Is it true that in a few brief months I have lost all influence over you, that my tears and entreaties are alike powerless to move you?

And when I see only too plainly that this is the case, you are angry because I summon some one to my aid. Is it possible that you are no longer able to distinguish good from evil, that all that is good and generous and noble is dead within you? In that case my last hope has indeed fled. I must bring myself face to face with the hideous reality, and as you force me, absolutely force me, to do it," added Marie, in a voice almost inaudible from horror, "I must remind you of that horrible scene, the other night, in the forest — in the forest — when you — when you tried — tried to kill — in the most cowardly manner — Oh, my God! my son, *my son*, an *assassin!*"

The last word was accompanied with such an outburst of despairing sobs that Frederick turned pale and trembled from head to foot.

On hearing the word "assassin" applied to him by his own mother, Frederick realised for the first time the enormity of the crime he had tried to commit, and noticing her son's gloomy silence, and the expression of profound despair that had succeeded his strained and sarcastic smile, Madame Bastien asked herself, with increasing anxiety, whether the result of this cruel scene would be disastrous or salutary for Frederick; but just then Marguerite entered hurriedly, and said to her mistress:

"The doctor has just arrived with another gentleman, madame. They wish to see you."

"Frederick," exclaimed the young mother, hastily wiping away her tears, "my son, it is your new tutor, M. David. I implore you — "

But she could not finish the sentence, for Doctor Dufour entered, accompanied by Henri David.

The latter bowed low to Madame Bastien, but as he raised his head he saw traces of recent tears on the lady's face. He noticed, too, Frederick's livid pallor and his gloomy and defiant air, so he would have had

no trouble in divining what had just taken place, even if an imploring look from Madame Bastien had not still further enlightened him.

"Madame, I have the honour to present my friend, M. Henri David," began the doctor.

Madame Bastien was so overwhelmed with emotion, that she could only rise from her chair, into which she sank back again after bowing to David, who said:

"I shall endeavour to be worthy of the confidence you have manifested in me, madame."

"My son," said Marie Bastien, in a voice she tried hard to steady, "I hope you will not disappoint the expectations of M. David, who has kindly consented to assume the direction of your studies."

"Monsieur," said Frederick, looking his new tutor full in the face, "you come here in spite of me. You will leave here on account of me."

"*Mon Dieu!*" murmured Madame Bastien, with a despairing sob, and, overcome with shame and confusion, she dared not even lift her eyes to Henri David's face.

"You will regret those words when you learn to know me better," said Henri David, with a look of infinite compassion.

Frederick burst into a shrill, sardonic laugh, and rushed out of the room.

"Don't leave him alone, doctor, I implore you," exclaimed the mother.

But this entreaty had not passed her lips before M. Dufour started after Frederick.

CHAPTER XX.

LEFT alone with Madame Bastien, Henri David remained silent for several minutes as if to collect his thoughts, then, turning to his companion, he said, earnestly:

"I wish, madame, that you could see in me a physician who is devoting himself to a dangerous but by no means hopeless case. I should like to receive from you a full account of all the events which have taken place since you first noticed the change in your son's character which distresses you so much. Our friend, Doctor Dufour, has already given me some information on the subject. But what you can tell me, madame, will doubtless enlighten me still more."

Marie complied with his request, but when she came to the description of the scene in the forest, she hesitated and turned pale, and her distress was so apparent that Henri David exclaimed:

"What is the matter, madame? This emotion, these tears —"

"Ah, monsieur, I should be unworthy of your generous aid if I concealed any portion of the truth from you, no matter how terrible it may be."

"What do you mean, madame?"

"Ah, monsieur," murmured Madame Bastien, with eyes downcast, "in a paroxysm of fever, or delirium, or I know not what, he lost his senses completely and went at night —"

"At night?"

"To the forest."

And as Madame Bastien again paused with a shudder, David repeated:

"To the forest?"

"Yes, to the forest, where he concealed himself behind a tree to shoot M. de Pont Brillant."

"A murderer!" exclaimed David, turning pale, "a murderer at sixteen."

"Have pity, monsieur, have pity," cried Marie, stretching out her hands imploringly.

"Do not forsake him," cried the unhappy woman, as if fearing this revelation would cause David to renounce his generous undertaking. "Alas, monsieur, the greater my misfortune, the more desperate my straits, the more you should pity me! Once more I beseech you not to forsake my son. My only hope is in you. What will become of me? What will become of him if you do? Besides, I tell you he was not in his right mind. He was delirious; he was mad!"

"You need have no fears of my abandoning your son, madame. Difficulties do not discourage me; they only impel me to renewed efforts. But you are mistaken in supposing that Frederick was insane. The deed was the inevitable result of the hatred that is consuming him."

"Oh, no, no, I cannot believe—"

"On the contrary, the conviction should reassure instead of alarming you. Frederick's animosity reached its highest pitch at that time, and we now know the full extent of the malady. The cause of this hatred is still shrouded in mystery, but I feel confident that we shall soon fathom it, and then the cure will be comparatively easy. We have many things in our favour. Frederick's tender years, his antecedents, your tender solicitude, my constant vigilance. All that is noble and generous in your son is paralysed temporarily, but rest assured that, purified by the very ordeal through which he is now

passing, your son will some day not only realise but even surpass your most sanguine hopes."

Henri David's tone was so earnest and convincing, there was such an expression of deep interest on his manly face, that Madame Bastien felt hope once more spring up in her heart, and she exclaimed, with profound emotion:

"The only thanks, monsieur, that I can give you — "

"Thanks, you owe me no thanks, madame," interrupted Henri David. "Our friend showed you my letter, and you know that in the work I am about to undertake I hope to find distraction from cruel grief, and that I also regard it as a sacred tribute to the memory of a deeply lamented brother."

"I shall not insist, monsieur, particularly as my words would so inadequately express my feelings, but I must say one word in relation to a rather painful subject," added Madame Bastien, lowering her eyes and blushing deeply. "I must ask your pardon in advance for the modest life you will be obliged to lead here, and I — "

"Permit me to interrupt you, here and now, madame," interposed David, smiling. "I have travelled a great deal, through uncivilised as well as civilised countries, so I am half sailor, half soldier, in the simplicity of my habits."

"But this is not all, monsieur," continued Madame Bastien, with increasing embarrassment. "I live alone most of the time. My husband's business keeps him away from home a great deal, but sometimes he spends several days here."

"Permit me to interrupt you once more, madame," said David, touched by Madame Bastien's evident embarrassment, particularly as he divined what she was about to say to him. "Our mutual friend, the doctor, has told me something of M. Bastien's habits, and you will find me anxious to do everything possible to prevent my presence here from disturbing that gentleman's

habits. I shall also do everything in my power to win his toleration, if not his regard; for, my work once begun, it would distress me very much to see it suddenly interrupted. In short, as I cannot remain here without M. Bastien's permission, I shall do my best to win his toleration, and any concessions which my self-respect will permit of will, I assure you, be cheerfully made."

Madame Bastien was deeply impressed by M. David's delicacy. She could not doubt that Doctor Dufour had told his friend of M. Bastien's habitual coarseness, and that the generous man who was consecrating himself to Frederick's salvation with such disinterested devotion had made up his mind in advance to many disagreeable and even humiliating experiences, though his pecuniary independence and his nobility of character made him superior.

Marie was the first to break the silence that ensued.

"M. David," she said, with gentle dignity, "will you let me show you to the room I must beg you to occupy here?"

David bowed, and followed her in silence.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was nearly dark.

Madame Bastien took a lamp, and, passing through the little dining-room where Marguerite was laying the table for the frugal evening meal, led the way to the garret, which was divided into three rooms, one occupied by Marguerite, another by the gardener, while the third was allotted to the tutor.

This was M. Bastien's arrangement. His wife had vainly endeavoured to convince him of the impropriety of lodging a tutor in this fashion, and had begged him to allow her to fit up a room on the floor below for his use, but he had flown into a violent passion, and declared that, if his wife disobeyed him, he would send the spouter of Latin up to the garret where he belonged as soon as he found it out.

Madame Bastien knew he was quite capable of carrying this threat into execution, so, to spare the new tutor such a humiliation, she had resigned herself to seeing her son's preceptor occupy a room so little in harmony with the importance of his functions.

If the young woman had taken so much to heart what she regarded as an insult to the dignity of her son's former tutor, one can judge of her feelings when it was inflicted upon Henri David, whose disinterestedness merited such heartfelt gratitude. Consequently, it was with painful confusion that she opened the door of the garret room which she had done her best to make cosy and inviting. A small blue and white china vase containing a bouquet of chrysanthemums and late roses stood on

the walnut table, the floor was of spotless whiteness, the white curtains were tied back with ribbons, in short, a desire to make the plainness of the apartment forgotten by dint of assiduous care and good-will was everywhere apparent.

"It is with deep regret, I assure you, that I am compelled to offer you this room," said Madame Bastien, "but my utter inability to place a more suitable apartment at your disposal must be my excuse."

Henri David could not repress a slight movement of surprise as he glanced around him, and, after a brief silence, he said, with a melancholy smile:

"By a singular chance, madame, this room strongly resembles one I occupied in boyhood beneath my father's roof, and it is pleasant to be thus reminded of the happiest years of my life."

When they went down-stairs they found supper ready.

"I am very much afraid that Frederick will refuse to come to the table this evening. Excuse me a moment, monsieur, while I go and call him."

Having learned from Marguerite that Frederick was in his room, Madame Bastien hastened there, and found her son thoughtfully pacing the room.

"Supper is ready, my son," his mother said. "Won't you come?"

"Thanks, I am not hungry, mother. I intend to go to bed almost immediately."

"You are not feeling ill, I trust?"

"No; only tired. I seem to need rest."

"I hope, my son, that you will consider how your words would have pained M. David, who already feels the tenderest interest in you, if he had not felt certain that he would soon overcome your prejudice by his kindness. He will be to you not a master, but a friend; I would say a brother but for the disparity in your ages."

Frederick made no reply. His mouth contracted slightly, and he hung his head, and Madame Bastien,

who had made a careful study of her son's face for some time past, saw that he was resolved to maintain an obstinate silence, so she insisted no further, but rejoined M. David.

After a frugal supper, Henri, wishing to divert his companion's thoughts, begged her to let him see Frederick's note-books and exercises, as well as some of the essays he had written in happier days, hoping he might find in these last some clue to the origin of the unfortunate ideas which seemed to have taken such entire possession of his mind.

While the new tutor was thus engaged the young mother watched him closely, in order that she might judge of the effect these specimens of Frederick's work produced upon him. Soon he took up an essay Frederick had written upon a theme suggested by his mother, and at first the young mother felt doubtful of its success, for M. David's features remained grave and thoughtful, but suddenly he smiled, and the smile was followed by several approving nods of the head, and two or three times he even murmured, "Good, very good." Then something seemed to displease him, for he crumpled one of the sheets of manuscript impatiently, and his features became impassible again as he continued his reading.

Marie's face reflected each shade of feeling depicted on David's face; but soon, and for the first time in a long while, the happy mother, forgetting her anxieties at least temporarily, could once more rejoice in Frederick's triumphs, for the signs of approbation on the new tutor's part became more frequent. He not only appeared to take a deep interest, but likewise a personal pride and delight in what he was reading, and at last he exclaimed, suddenly:

"No, no; it is impossible that the author of sentiments as noble and generous as these should not listen sooner or later to the voice of justice and reason. May

I ask, madame, if this was written very long before the time at which you first began to notice the change in your son's character?"

After a moment's reflection, Madame Bastien replied:

"As nearly as I can recollect, this was written just before a visit we paid to the Château de Pont Brillant the latter part of June. It was not until about a month afterward that I began to feel uneasy about Frederick."

After a moment's thought, David asked:

"Have you anything that Frederick has written since you noticed this marked change in his nature? If you have, it might aid us in solving this mystery."

"The idea is a good one," replied Madame Bastien, and, struck by a sudden recollection, she selected one of her son's books. She handed it to M. David, saying as she did so:

"Several pages are lacking here, as you see. I asked Frederick why he had mutilated it in this fashion, and he replied that he was dissatisfied with what he had written and did not want me to read it. This occurred just as I was beginning to feel really anxious about him."

"And you noticed nothing significant in the remaining pages, madame?"

"You can see for yourself, monsieur. Since that time Frederick has written little or nothing, his distaste for work becoming more and more marked from that time on. In vain I have suggested themes of divers kinds; he would write a few lines, then drop his pen, and, burying his face in his hands, sit for hours together, deaf alike to all my questions and entreaties."

While Madame Bastien was speaking David was hastily glancing over the fragmentary writings his hostess had just handed to him.

"It is strange," he remarked, after several minutes, "these incoherent lines show none of the nobility of feeling that characterise your son's other writings. His

mind seems to have become clouded, and the lassitude and ennui his work caused him is everywhere apparent. But here are a few words which seem to have been carefully erased," added David, trying to decipher them.

Marie approached her guest with the intention of assisting him, if possible, and as she bent over the table her arm lightly grazed David's.

The pressure was so slight that Marie did not even notice it, but it sent a sort of electric thrill through David; but so great was his self-control that he remained perfectly impassive, though he realised for the first time since he made his generous offer that the woman with whom he was to live on such terms of intimacy was young and wonderfully beautiful, as well as endowed with the most admirable traits of character.

He gave no sign of all this, however, but with Marie's assistance continued his efforts to decipher the words Frederick had erased, and after patient study they succeeded in making out here and there the following phrases which seemed to have no connection whatever with what preceded or followed them, but had apparently been jotted down almost involuntarily under the influence of some strong emotion. For instance, one leaf bore this fragmentary sentence:

" . . . for persons doomed to a humiliating obscurity of lot, the inability to lift oneself from it is — "

Two or three words at the beginning of the sentence had been entirely obliterated.

Farther on, upon another page were these two words, but slightly blurred, as if their laconicism was sufficient protection against interpretation:

" Why? By what right — "

And lastly, this more complete sentence was deciphered with great difficulty:

" Through you, great and holy Revolution, the weak became the strong. The hour of vengeance came at last, terrible indeed, but grand and far-reaching in its — "

As David was slowly perusing these words a second time as if to gather their hidden significance, the clock on the mantel struck twelve.

"Twelve!" exclaimed Madame Bastien, in surprise, "twelve o'clock already!"

David rose at once, and, taking the book, said:

"With your permission, madame, I will take this with me. What we have deciphered is very vague, but it may give us a clue to the truth. "Good night, madame."

"Good night, M. David. I gladly accept all the encouragement you hold out to me. I need it more than I can tell you. To-morrow will be a momentous day to us. God grant it may prove a propitious one."

"God grant it, madame."

CHAPTER XXII.

As soon as his mother's words brought a full realisation of the crime he had tried to commit, Frederick experienced the keenest remorse; but though he was conscientious enough to feel appalled by his attempt at homicide, he was far from being cured of his hatred and envy.

During the night that immediately followed Henri David's arrival at the farm, Frederick underwent a new transformation that very naturally disconcerted both his mother and M. David. Both were instantly struck by the change in the lad's expression. It was no longer haughty, sarcastic, and defiant, but embarrassed and crestfallen. Madame Bastien and David had anticipated a fresh ebullition of temper when Frederick's second interview with his tutor took place, but nothing of the kind occurred.

David questioned the lad in relation to his studies; he replied promptly and definitely, but in regard to all extraneous subjects he maintained a determined silence.

Marie proposed that he take a walk with David, and Frederick consented without the slightest demur. During the long walk the new tutor, whose stock of information was as extensive as it was varied, tried to call Frederick's attention to some of the most interesting phenomena of nature, a bit of rock serving as the starting-point for a dissertation on the most curious of the different ages of the earth and the successive transformation of its inhabitants, while an old ruin near the

farmhouse led to a series of interesting comments on the warlike habits of the middle ages and the narration of a number of quaint old legends, to which his youthful companion listened politely but replied only in monosyllables.

As soon as they returned Frederick picked up a book and read until dinner-time, after which he asked to be excused for the rest of the evening.

On being left alone, David and Marie exchanged discontented glances, for both felt that the first day had proved a failure.

"I am almost tempted to regret the change I notice in him," remarked David, thoughtfully. "Pronounced as his asperity of manner was, it nevertheless gave one a sort of hold, but what can one do confronted with a surface as hard and polished as glass?"

"But what do you think of this sudden change?"

"Is it the calm that follows the subsidence of the tempest or the treacherous calm which often precedes another storm? We shall know by and by. This change may be due to my arrival."

"How is that, M. David?"

"Perhaps he feels that our double surveillance will make another attempt at vengeance impossible; perhaps he fears that my penetration, united with yours, madame, would ferret out his secret, so he increases his constraint and reserve."

"And the book you took to your room last night?"

"Has given me a slight clue, perhaps, madame, but it is such a very weak and feeble one that I must ask you to pardon me for not even mentioning it. Ours is such a difficult and extremely delicate task that the merest trifle may make or mar us. So once more I implore you to forgive my reticence."

"You ask my pardon, M. David, when your very reserve is a proof of your generous solicitude for the person I hold nearest and dearest on earth."

As Madame Bastien was preparing for bed that same night, old Marguerite came in and said:

"You have been so occupied with M. David since you returned from your walk that I have had no chance to tell you about something very remarkable that happened to-day."

"What was it, pray?"

"Why, you had been gone about an hour when I heard a great noise at the gate of the courtyard, and what should I see there but a grand carriage drawn by four splendid horses, and who should be in the carriage but the Marquise de Pont Brillant, and she said she wanted to speak to you!"

"To me!" exclaimed Marie, turning pale as the idea that Frederick's attempt had been discovered occurred to her. "You must be mistaken, Marguerite. I do not know the marquise."

"It was you that the dear good lady wished to see, madame. She even said to me that she was terribly disappointed not to find you at home, as she came to make a neighbourly call. She intended to come again some day soon, with her grandson, but that must not hinder you from coming to the castle soon, very soon, to return her visit."

"What can this mean?" Madame Bastien said to herself, greatly puzzled, and shuddering at the mere thought of a meeting between Frederick and Raoul de Pont Brillant. "She told you she was coming again soon, with —"

"With monsieur le marquis, yes, madame, and the dear lady even added: 'He is a handsome fellow, this grandson of mine, and as generous as a king. Oh, well, as I have had the misfortune to miss Madame Bastien, I may as well go. But say, my good woman,' added madame la marquise, 'I am frightfully thirsty, can't you get me a nice glass of cold water?' 'Certainly, madame la marquise,' I replied, ashamed that such a

grand lady should have to remind me to offer her such a courtesy. But I said to myself, 'Madame la marquise asked for water out of politeness, I will show my politeness by giving her a glass of wine;' so I ran to my pantry, and poured out a big tumbler of wine and set it on a clean plate and took it to the carriage."

"You ought to have given Madame de Pont Brillant the glass of water she asked for, but it makes no difference."

"Pardon me, madame, but I did right to take her the wine, for she took it."

"The big tumbler of wine?"

"Yes, madame, that she did. It is true she only moistened her lips with it, but she made another old lady who was with her drink the rest of it, and I think she couldn't have been very fond of wine, for she made a sort of face after she drank it, and madame la marquise added, 'Tell Madame Bastien that we drank to her health and to her beautiful eyes,' and when she returned the glass she slipped these five shining gold pieces into my hand, saying: 'These are for Madame Bastien's servants on condition that they will drink to the health of my grandson, the Marquis de Pont Brillant. *Au revoir*, my good woman.' And the handsome coach whirled away."

"I am very sorry that you didn't have the delicacy to decline to take the money she offered you."

"What, madame, refuse five louis d'or?"

"It is for the very reason that this is such a large sum of money that I am so sorry you accepted it."

"I didn't know, madame. It is the first time such a thing ever happened. If madame wants me to, I'll take these five gold pieces up to the château, and return them to the lady."

"That would only make a bad matter worse, but if you want to please me, Marguerite, you will give this hundred francs to the poor of our parish."

"I'll do that very thing to-morrow, madame," said Marguerite, bravely, "for these gold pieces burn my fingers, now you tell me I did wrong to take them."

"Thank you, Marguerite, thank you. I always knew you were a good, true woman. But one word more. Does my son know that Madame de Pont Brillant was here?"

"No, madame, for I have not told him, and I was alone in the house when the carriage came."

"Very well. I don't want my son to know anything about this visit, Marguerite."

"I won't breathe a word, then."

"And if Madame de Pont Brillant calls again you are to say that I am not at home, whether I am or not."

"What, madame, you won't see this great lady?"

"I am no great lady, my good Marguerite, and I do not crave the society of those who are so far above me in rank, so let it be understood that I am not at home if Madame de Pont Brillant calls again, and also that my son must remain entirely ignorant of to-day's visit."

"Very well, madame, you may trust me for that."

The next morning Madame Bastien informed M. David of the circumstance, and he commented on two things that had also struck Madame Bastien, though from an entirely different point of view.

"The request for a glass of water was evidently only an excuse for the bestowal of an extraordinarily large gratuity," said David. "The lady also announced her intention of soon coming again, I understand, though —"

"Though she begged me not to trouble myself to return her visit at the château," interrupted Marie. "I noted this humiliating distinction, and though I had not the slightest intention of responding to Madame de Pont Brillant's advances, this warning on her part obliges me to close my doors upon her in future. Far from being flattered by this visit, the possibility of her returning here, particularly with her grandson, alarms

me beyond measure, remembering as I do that terrible scene in the forest. But this much is certain, the young Marquis de Pont Brillant knows nothing of Frederick's animosity. If he did, he certainly would not consent to accompany his grandmother here. Ah, monsieur, my brain fairly reels when I try to solve the mystery."

Two or three days more were devoted to fruitless efforts on the part of the mother and tutor.

Frederick remained impenetrable.

At last M. David resorted to heroic measures, and spoke of Raoul de Pont Brillant. Frederick changed colour and hung his head, but remained silent and impassible.

"He must at least have renounced his idea of vengeance," decided David, after studying the youth's face attentively. "The animosity still exists, perhaps, but it will at least be passive henceforth."

Marie shared this conviction, so her fears were to some extent allayed.

One day M. David said to Madame Bastien:

"While accepting with comparative cheerfulness the modest existence led by the members of your household, madame, has he never seemed to crave wealth and luxury, or deplore the fact that he does not possess them?"

"Never, M. David, never have I heard Frederick express a desire of that kind. How often has he tenderly exclaimed:

"'Ah, mother, could any lot be happier than ours? What happiness it is to be able to live on here with you—'"

But the poor mother could not finish the sentence. This recollection of a radiant past was too overpowering.

Each day the intimacy between Henri David and Marie Bastien was increased by their common interests and anxieties. There was a continual interchange of

questions, confidences, fears, plans or hopes, alas! only too rare, — all having Frederick for their object.

The long winter evenings were usually passed tête-à-tête, for Madame Bastien's son retired at eight o'clock, feigning fatigue in order to escape from the solicitude that surrounded him, and that he might pursue his gloomy meditations undisturbed.

"I am more unhappy now than ever," he said to himself. "In times gone by my mother's continual questions about my secret malady irritated me; now they break my heart and augment my despair. I understand all my mother must suffer. Each day brings some new proof of her tender commiseration and her untiring efforts to cure me, but, alas! she can never forgive nor forget my crime. I shall be to her henceforth only an object of compassion. I think exactly the same of M. David that I do of my mother. I do full justice to his devotion to me and to my mother, but it is equally powerless to cure me, and to efface the remembrance of the vile and cowardly act of which I was guilty."

Meanwhile Henri David, believing himself on the track at last, was extending his researches to the most trivial subjects, at least apparently. Convinced that Frederick had powerful reasons for concealing his feelings from his mother, he might exercise less constraint in his intercourse with the two old servants on the place. Henri questioned them closely, and thus became cognisant of several highly significant facts. Among others, a beggar to whom Frederick had always been very generous said to the gardener: "M. Frederick has changed very much. He always used to be so kind-hearted, but to-day he gruffly told me: 'Apply to M. le marquis. He is so rich! Let him help you!'"

Madame Bastien usually saw David several times a day.

One day he did not make his appearance at all.

When supper-time came Marguerite went to tell him that the meal was on the table, but David bade the servant say to Madame Bastien that, not feeling very well, would she kindly excuse him for not coming down as usual?

Frederick, too, refused to leave his room, so Marie, for the first time since Henri David's arrival, spent the evening alone.

This loneliness caused a feeling of profound depression, and she was assailed by all sorts of gloomy presentiments.

When she went to her room about eleven o'clock, her son was asleep, or pretended to be asleep, so sadly and silently she slipped on a wrapper and let down her long hair, preparatory to brushing it for the night, when old Marguerite, coming in as usual to inquire if her mistress wanted anything before retiring, remarked, as she was about to withdraw:

"I forgot to ask you if André could have the horse and cart to go to Pont Brillant to-morrow morning, madame?"

"Yes," answered Marie, abstractedly.

"You know why André has got to go to the village, don't you, madame?"

"No," replied Marie, with the same deeply absorbed air.

"Why, it is to take M. David's things. He is going away, it seems."

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Madame Bastien, letting the mass of hair she had been holding fall upon her shoulders, and, turning suddenly to the old servant, "What are you saying, Marguerite?"

"I say that the gentleman is going away, madame."

"What gentleman?"

"Why, M. David, M. Frederick's new tutor, and it is a pity, for—"

"He is going away?" repeated Madame Bastien,

interrupting Marguerite in such a strangely altered voice, and with such an expression of grief and dismay, that the servant gazed at her wonderingly. "There must be some mistake. How do you know that M. David is going away?"

"He is sending his things away."

"Who told you so?"

"André."

"How does he know?"

"Why, yesterday M. David asked André if he could get a horse and cart to send some trunks to Pont-Brillant in a day or two. André told him yes; so I thought I ought to tell you that André intended to use the horse to-morrow, that is all."

"M. David has become discouraged. He abandons the task as an impossibility. The embarrassment and regret he feels are the cause of his holding himself so sedulously aloof all day. My son is lost!"

This was Marie's first and only thought. And, wild with despair, forgetting her disordered toilet and the lateness of the hour, she rushed up-stairs and burst into David's room, leaving Marguerite stupefied with amazement.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN Marie presented herself so unexpectedly before him, David was seated at his little table in the attitude of meditation. At the sight of the young woman, pale, weeping, her hair dishevelled, and in the disorder of her night-dress, he rose abruptly, and, turning as pale as Marie herself, at the fear that some dreadful event had taken place, said:

"Madame, what has happened? Has Frederick —"

"M. David!" exclaimed the young woman, "it is impossible for you to abandon us in this way!"

"Madame —"

"I tell you, that you shall not leave, no, you cannot have the heart to do it. My only, my last hope is in you, because — you know it well, oh, my God! — I have no one in the world to help me but you!"

"Madame, a word, I implore you."

Marie, clasping her hands, continued in a supplicating voice:

"Mercy, M. David, be good and generous to the end. Why are you discouraged? The transports of my son have ceased, he has given up his plans for vengeance. That is already a great deal, and that I owe to your influence. Frederick's dejection increases, but that is no reason for despair. My God! My God! Perhaps you think me ungrateful, because I express my gratitude to you so poorly. It is not my fault. My poor child seems as dear to you as to me. Sometimes you say *our* Frederick; then I forget that you are a stranger who has had pity on us! Your tenderness toward my son

seems to me so sincere that I am no more astonished at your devotion to him than at my own."

In his astonishment, David had not at first been able to find a word; then he experienced such delight in hearing Marie portray her gratitude in such a touching manner that, in spite of himself, he did not reassure her, perhaps, as soon as he could have done so. Nevertheless, reproaching himself for not putting an end to the agony of this unhappy woman, he said:

"Will you listen to me, madame?"

"No, no," cried she, with the impetuosity of grief and entreaty. "Oh, you surely will have pity, you will not kill me with despair, after having made me hope so much! How can I do without you now? Oh, my God! what do you think will become of us if you go away? Oh, monsieur, there is one memory which is all-powerful with you, the memory of your brother. In the name of this memory, I implore you not to abandon Frederick. You have been as tender with him as if he were your own child or your own brother. These are sacred links which unite you and me, and you will not break these links without pity; no, no, it cannot be possible!"

And sobs stifled the voice of the young woman.

Tears came also to the eyes of David, and he hastened to say to Madame Bastien, in a voice full of emotion:

"I do not know, madame, what has made you think that I intended to go away. Nothing was farther from my thought."

"Really!" exclaimed Marie, in a voice which connot be described.

"And if I must tell you, madame, while I have not been discouraged, I have realised the difficulty of our task; but to-day, at this hour, for the first time I have good hope."

"My God, you hear him!" murmured Marie with religious fervour. "May this hope not be in vain!"

"It will not be, madame, I have every reason to believe, and, far from contemplating departure, I have spent my time in reflecting all this day, because to-morrow may offer something decisive. And in order that my reflections might not be interrupted, I did not appear at dinner, under the pretext of a slight indisposition. Calm yourself, madame, I implore you in my turn. Believe that I have only one thought in the world, the salvation of our Frederick. To-day this salvation is not only possible, but probable. Yes, everything tells me that to-morrow will be a happy day for us."

It is impossible to describe the transformation which, at each word of David, was manifested in the countenance of the young woman. Her face, so pale and distorted by agony, became suddenly bright with joyous surprise; her lovely features, half veiled by her loose and beautiful hair, now shone with ineffable hope.

Marie was so adorably beautiful, thus attired in her white dressing-gown, half open from the violent palpitations of her bosom, that a deep blush mounted to David's brow, and the passionate love that he had so long felt, not without dread, now took possession of his heart.

"M. David," continued Madame Bastien, "surely you will not deceive me with false hope, in order to escape my prayers, and spare yourself the sight of my tears. Oh, forgive me, forgive me! I am ashamed of this last doubt, the last echo of my past terror. Oh, I believe you, yes, I believe you! I am so happy to believe you!"

"You can do so, madame, for I have never lied," replied David, scarcely daring to look up at Marie, whose beauty intoxicated him almost to infatuation. "But who, madame, has led you to suppose that I was going away?"

"It was Marguerite who told me a little while ago in my chamber; then, in my dismay, I ran to you."

These words reminded David that the presence of Madame Bastien in his chamber at a late hour of the night might seem strange to the servants of the house, in spite of the affectionate respect with which they regarded the young mother, so, taking advantage of the excuse she had just offered, he advanced to the threshold of his door, left open during this conversation, and called Marguerite in a loud voice.

"I beg your pardon, madame," said he to Marie, who looked at him with surprise. "I would like to know why Marguerite thought I was going away."

The servant, astonished and frightened by the sudden flight of her mistress, hurried to David's chamber, and he at once said to her:

"My dear Marguerite, you have just been the cause of great distress to Madame Bastien, by telling her that I was preparing to leave the house, and that, too, at a time when Frederick, this poor child whom you have seen from his birth, has need of all our care. In her deep anxiety, Madame Bastien ran up here; fortunately, I have been able to satisfy her; but, again, how came you to think I was about to leave?"

"As I told madame, M. David, you had asked André for a horse and cart to carry trunks to Pont Brillant. then, I thought —"

"That is true," said David, interrupting Marguerite.

Then, addressing Marie, he said:

"A thousand pardons, madame, for having given reason for the mistake which has caused you so much anxiety. The story is simply this: I had charge of some boxes of books that I was to deliver, upon my arrival at Senegal, to one of my compatriots. In departing from Nantes, I had, in my preoccupation of mind, given order to address my baggage here; these boxes, contrary to my intention, were included in the list, and it was —"

"To return them to Nantes by the coach which passes

Pont Brillant that you asked for a horse and cart, was it not, M. David?" said the old servant.

"Exactly, my dear Marguerite."

"It is the fault of André, too," said the servant. "He told me trunks. I said trunks or effects, which are the same thing, but, thank God! you have calmed madame, and you must stay, M. David, because, if left alone, she will have trouble with poor M. Frederick."

During this interchange of explanation between Marguerite and David, Madame Bastien, altogether encouraged, came, so to speak, to herself entirely; then feeling her hair float over her half-naked bosom, she thought of the disorder of her attire; but she was so pure and unaffected, so much the mother more than the woman, that she attached no importance to the fact of her nocturnal interview with David; but when her instinct of natural modesty awakened, she reflected upon the embarrassment and painful awkwardness of running to David's chamber in her night-dress, and she saw at once the delicacy of sentiment which he had obeyed in calling Marguerite and demanding an explanation of the circumstances.

These reflections filled her mind while David and Marguerite were conversing upon the subject.

Not knowing how to arrange her disordered toilet without being seen by David, and feeling that any attempt at arrangement was a tacit avowal of her embarrassment, however excusable, the young woman found a way out of the complication.

The servant wore a large red woollen shawl. Madame Bastien took it and silently wrapped it around herself, then, as many of the women of the country do, she put it over her head and crossed it, so that her floating hair was half hidden and she was enveloped to her waist in the long folds of the shawl.

This was done with so much quickness that David did not perceive the metamorphosis in Marie's cos-

tume until she said to her servant, with affectionate familiarity:

"My good Marguerite, forgive me for taking your shawl, but to-night is freezing, and I am cold."

If David had found the young woman adorably beautiful and attractive with dishevelled hair and all in white, he beheld a still more captivating beauty in her as she stood wrapped in this mantle of scarlet; nothing could have more enhanced the soft brilliancy of her large blue eyes, the lovely colour of her brown hair, and the delicate rose of her complexion.

"Good night, M. David," said the young mother; "after having entered your room in despair, I leave it greatly encouraged, since you tell me that to-morrow will be a day of decisive experience for Frederick, and perhaps a day of happiness for us."

"Yes, madame, I have good hope, and if you will permit it, to-morrow morning, before seeing Frederick, I would like to meet you in the library."

"I will await you there, M. David, and with great impatience. God grant that our anticipations may not be mistaken. Good night again, M. David. Come, Marguerite."

Long after the young woman had left the chamber of David, he stood motionless in the same place, trembling with rapture, as he pictured to himself the enchanting loveliness of the face sheltered under the folds of the scarlet shawl.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE next morning at eight o'clock David awaited Madame Bastien in the library; she soon arrived there.

"Good morning, madame," said the preceptor to her. "Well, how now about Frederick?"

"Really, M. David, I do not know if I ought to rejoice or feel alarmed, for last night something very strange happened."

"What is that, madame?"

"Overcome by the emotions of yesterday evening, I slept one of those profound and heavy sleeps, the awakening from which often leaves you in a state of torpor for a few moments, and you are hardly conscious of what is passing around you. Suddenly it seemed to me that, half awake, I do not know why, I saw indistinctly by the light of the lamp Frederick leaning over my bed. He looked at me and was weeping as he said, 'Good-bye, mother, good-bye.' I wanted to speak to him and tried to do so, but the torpor against which I was struggling prevented me for some minutes. At last, after a desperate effort of my will, I woke, thoroughly. Frederick had disappeared. Still quite bewildered, I asked myself if this apparition was a dream or a reality. After waiting a while I went to my son's chamber. He was sleeping or pretended to be sleeping soundly. In my doubt, I did not dare awake him, for the poor child sleeps so little now!"

"And have you mentioned the incident of last night to him this morning?"

"Yes; but he appeared to be so sincerely surprised at

what I told him, and declared so naturally that he had not left his chamber, that I do not know what to think. Have I been the dupe of an illusion? In my constant thought of Frederick, could I have taken a dream for reality? That is possible. Yet it seems to me I can still see my son's face bathed in tears and hear his distressed voice say to me, 'Good-bye, mother, good-bye!' —but pardon me, monsieur," said Madame Bastien, in an altered voice, holding her handkerchief to her eyes, "the very memory of this word 'good-bye' makes me wretched. Why these good-byes? Where does he wish to go? Dream or reality, this word distresses me, in spite of myself."

"Calm yourself, madame," said David, after having listened attentively to Madame Bastien. "I think, with you, that the apparition of Frederick has been an illusion produced by the continual tension of your mind. A thousand examples attest the possibility of such hallucinations."

"But this word — good-bye? Ah, I cannot tell you the anguish of heart it has caused me, the gloomy foreboding that it leaves with me still."

"Pardon me, madame, but do not attach any importance to a dream. I say dream, because it is difficult to admit the reality of this incident. Would Frederick come and weep by your pillow, and tell you good-bye during your sleep? Why do you think he wishes to leave you? Where could he go, now that our united watchfulness guards his every step?"

"That is true, M. David; yet —"

"Pray, take courage, madame, and, besides, you have just told me that, with the exception of this incident, you did not know whether to rejoice or feel alarm, — what is the cause of that?"

"This morning Frederick appeared calm, almost contented; he no longer had an air of dejection; he smiled, and embraced me as in the past, with tender effusion,

imploring me to forgive him for the grief he had caused me, and promising to do everything in the world to make me forget it. So, taking your assuring words of yesterday, and this unexpected language of my son, and the kind of satisfaction that I read in his countenance, together, I ought to be happy — very happy."

"In fact, madame, why should you feel alarmed? This sudden change, which agrees with my hopes and plans so marvellously, ought, on the contrary —"

David was interrupted by the entrance of Frederick.

Pale, as usual, but his brow serene and lips smiling, he advanced to his preceptor with an air of frankness, and said, with a mingling of deference and cordiality:

"M. David, I wish to ask your indulgence and your forgiveness for a poor half-foolish boy, who, upon your arrival here, said such words to you as would have made him blush with shame if he had been aware of his thoughts and actions. Since that time this poor boy has become less rude, although he has remained unimpressed by the thousand evidences of kindness which you have given him. Of all these wrongs he repents. Will you grant me his pardon?"

"With all my heart, my brave boy," replied David, exchanging a look of surprise and happiness with Madame Bastien.

"Thank you, M. David," replied Frederick, pressing with emotion the hands of his preceptor in his own; "thank you for my mother and for myself."

"Ah, my child," said Madame Bastien, quickly, "I cannot tell you how happy you make me; our sad days are all at an end."

"Yes, mother; and I swear to you that it will not be I who will cause you sorrow."

"My dear Frederick," said David, smiling, "you know that I am not an ordinary preceptor, and that I love to take the fields for my study-hall; the weather is quite fine this morning, suppose we go out for a walk."

Frederick started imperceptibly.

Then he replied, immediately:

"I am at your service, M. David."

And turning to Madame Bastien, he said:

"Good-bye, mother!" and embraced the young woman.

It is impossible to describe what Madame Bastien felt when she heard the words, "Good-bye, mother."

These words which, the night before, whether illusion or reality, had filled her heart with such gloomy forebodings!

Marie thought, too, that her son, so to speak, made his kisses linger longer than was his habit, and that his hand that she held trembled in her own.

The emotion of the young mother was so intense that her face became deadly pale, and she exclaimed, in spite of herself, with an accent of fright:

"My God, Frederick, where are you going?"

David's eyes did not leave Madame Bastien a moment; he understood all, and said to her, with the most natural air in the world, at the same time placing intentional stress on certain words:

"Why, madame, Frederick has said *good-bye* to you because he is going to take a walk with me."

"Of course, mother," added the young man, struck with the emotion of Madame Bastien, and secretly throwing on her an anxious and penetrating glance.

David surprised this glance, and he made an expressive sign to Madame Bastien, as much as to say:

"What have you to fear? Am I not there?"

"That is true; my fears are foolish," thought Madame Bastien. "Is not M. David with Frederick?"

All this passed in much less time than it takes to write it. The preceptor, taking Frederick by the arm, said to Madame Bastien, smiling:

"It is probable, madame, that our class in the open field will last until breakfast. You see that I am with-

out pity for my pupil. I wish to bring him back to you weary with fatigue."

Madame Bastien opened the glass door which led into the study hall under the grove.

David and Frederick went out.

The youth evaded his mother's glance a second time.

For a long time the young woman remained sad and thoughtful on the threshold of the door, her eyes fixed on the road that her son and David had taken.

"I leave the choice of our walk to you, my dear child," said David to Frederick, when they had reached the edge of the forest.

"Oh, my God, M. David, it matters little to me," replied Frederick, honestly, "but since you leave the choice to me, I am going to take you to a part of the wood that you perhaps are not acquainted with, — look, — near that clump of fir-trees that you see down there on the top of the hill."

"True, my child, I have never been on that side of the forest," said David, walking with his pupil toward the designated spot.

More and more surprised at the strange coincidence between his hopes and the sudden alteration in the son of Madame Bastien, David observed him attentively and remarked that almost always he held his head down, although, as they crossed the forest, he had two or three times turned involuntarily to look at his mother, whom he could see through the vista of tall trees, standing in the door.

After examining him for some minutes, David discovered that this calmness of Frederick was feigned. Once out of the presence of his mother, the young man not only did not control himself long at a time, but became anxious and abstracted, his features contracting sometimes in pain, and again assuming an expression of painful serenity, if such a thing can be said, which alarmed David no little.

Not to frighten Madame Bastien, he had tried to persuade her that the apparition of Frederick, on the preceding night, was only a dream. But David did not so believe; he regarded Frederick's farewells to his sleeping mother a reality. This circumstance, with what he had just observed in the lad, made him fear that his pupil's sudden change was a piece of acting, and might conceal some sinister motive.

"But, fortunately," thought David, "I am here with him."

When they had left the forest, Frederick took a road covered with turf, across the fallow ground, which, leaving the wood around Pont Brillant to the right, conducted him to the crest of a little hill where stood five or six isolated fir-trees.

"My dear child," said David, at the end of a few minutes, "I am so pleased with the words of affectionate confidence you addressed to me this morning, because they could not have come at a better time."

"Why is that, M. David?"

"Because, secure in this confidence and affection that I have tried to inspire in you up to this time, I will now be able to undertake a task which at first seemed very difficult."

"And what is this task?"

"To make you as happy as you were formerly."

"I!" exclaimed Frederick, involuntarily.

"Yes."

"But," replied Frederick, with self-repression, "I am no longer unhappy, I said so this morning to my mother; the malady that I suffered from, and which has embittered my feelings, has disappeared almost entirely. Besides, M. Dufour has told my mother that it is at an end."

"Truly, my child, you are no longer unhappy? All your sorrows are at an end? Your heart is free, contented, and joyous, as it used to be?"

"Monsieur —"

"Alas! my dear Frederick, the integrity of your heart will prevent your dissimulating a long time. Yes, although you have told your mother this morning she need have no fear, you are suffering this very hour, and perhaps more than in the past."

Frederick's features contracted. David's penetration crushed him, and, to avoid his glances, he looked downward.

David watched him closely, and continued:

"Even your silence, my dear child, proves to me that the task which I have undertaken, to render you as happy as you have been in the past, is still to be fulfilled. No doubt you are astonished that I have not tried to undertake it before. The reason for it is simple enough. I did not wish to venture without absolute certainty, and it was only yesterday that I arrived at a certainty of conviction concerning the malady which oppresses you, indeed, which is killing you. Now I know the cause."

Frederick trembled with dismay. This dismay, mingled with surprise, was painted in every look he cast upon David.

Then, regretting the betrayal of his feelings, the young man relapsed into gloomy silence.

"What I have told you, my child, astonishes you, and it ought to do so," replied David, "but," added he, in a tone of tender reproach, "why are you frightened at my penetration? When our friend, Doctor Dufour, healed you of a mortal ailment, was he not obliged, in order to combat your disease, to know the cause of it?"

Frederick said nothing.

During several minutes, as the two were approaching the hill upon which stood the lonely fir-trees, the son of Madame Bastien had from time to time glanced slyly and uneasily at his companion. He seemed to fear the miscarriage of some project which he had been contemplating since he had left his mother's house.

Just as they finished talking, David observed that the road bordering on the crest of the hill changed into a narrow path which skirted the clump of fir-trees, and that Frederick, in an attitude of apparent deference, had stopped a moment, as if he did not wish to step in advance of his preceptor. David, attaching no importance to so natural and trivial an incident, passed on before the youth.

At the end of a few moments, not hearing Frederick's step behind him, he turned around.

The son of Madame Bastien had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXV.

DAVID, bewildered with astonishment, continued to look around him.

At his right extended the fallow ground, across which meandered the road which, with Frederick, he had just followed to arrive at the crest of the hill, and he discovered then for the first time, as he took several steps to the left, that on this side this bend of the ground was cut almost perpendicular, in a length of three or four hundred feet, and hung over a great wood, the highest summits of which reached only to a third of the escarpment.

From the culminating point where he stood, David, commanding the plain a long distance, satisfied himself that Frederick was neither before nor behind him, nor was he on his right; he must then have disappeared suddenly by the escarpment on the left.

David's anguish was insupportable when he thought of Madame Bastien's despair if he should return to her alone. But this inactive terror did not last long. A man of great coolness and of a determination often put to the test in perilous journeys, he had acquired a rapidity of decision which is the only hope of safety in extreme danger.

In a second he made the following argument, acting, so to speak, as he thought:

"Frederick has escaped from me only on the side of the escarpment; he has not thrown himself down this precipice, I would have heard the sound of his falling body as it broke the branches of the great trees I see

there below me; he has then descended by some place known to himself; the ground is muddy, I ought to discover his tracks; where he has passed I will pass, he cannot be more than five minutes in advance of me."

David had travelled on foot with Indian tribes in North America, and, more than once in the chase, separated from the main body of his companions in the virgin forests of the New World, he had learned from the Indians with whom he hunted how, by means of rare sagacity and observation, to find those who had disappeared from his sight.

Returning then to the spot where he had first perceived that Frederick had disappeared, David saw in the length of five or six metres, no other than that made by his own steps; but suddenly he recognised Frederick's tracks turning abruptly toward the edge of the escarpment, which they coasted for a little, then disappeared.

David looked down below.

At a distance of about fifteen feet the top of an elm extended its immense arms so far as to touch the steep declivity of the escarpment. Between the thick foliage of this tree-top and the spot where he was standing, David observed a large cluster of broom, which one could reach by crawling along a wide gap in the clayey soil; there he discovered fresh footprints.

"Frederick succeeded in reaching this tuft of brushwood," said David, taking the same road with as much agility as daring, "and afterward," thought he, "suspending himself by the hands, he placed his foot on one of the largest branches at the top of the elm, and from there descended from branch to branch until he reached the foot of the tree."

In David the action accompanied the thought always. In a few minutes he had glided to the top of the tree; a few little branches broken recently, and the erosion of the bark in several spots where Frederick had placed his feet, indicated his passage.

When David had slowly descended to the foot of the tree, the thick bed of leaves, detached by the autumn and heaped upon the soil, rendered the exploration of Frederick's path more difficult; but the slight depression of this foliage where he had stepped, and the broken or separated underbrush, very thick in spots he had just crossed, having been carefully noted by David, served to guide him across a vast circumference. When he came out of this ground he heard a hollow sound, not far distant, but quite startling, which he had not noticed before in the midst of the rustling of branches and dry leaves.

This startling noise was the sound of many waters.

The practised ear of David left him no doubt upon the subject. A horrible idea entered his mind, but his activity and resolution, suspended a moment by fright, received a new and vigorous impulse. The enclosure from which he had just issued bordered on a winding walk where the moist soil still showed the tracks of Frederick's feet. David followed it in great haste, because he perceived by the intervals and position of these tracks that in this spot the young man had been running.

But soon a hard, dry soil, as it was sandy and more elevated, succeeded the soft lowlands, and no more tracks could be seen.

David then found himself in a sort of cross-roads where he could hear distinctly the sound of the Loire, whose waters, swollen to an unusual degree in a few days, roared with fury.

David at once resolved to run straight to the river, guiding himself by its sound, since it was impossible any longer to follow Frederick by his tracks. Full of anguish and concern for the boy's mother, — an anguish all the more intense from the recollection of the farewells addressed to her by Frederick, — he darted across the wood in an easterly direction according to the roar of the river.

At the end of ten minutes, leaving the undergrowth,

David ran across a prairie which ended with the bluff of the river. This bluff he cleared in a few bounds.

At his feet he saw an immense sheet of water, yellow, rapid, and foaming, the waves of which broke and died upon the sand.

As far as his view extended, David, panting from his precipitate run, could discover nothing.

Nothing but the other shore of the river drowned in mist.

Nothing but a gray and sullen sky, from which a beating rain began to fall.

Nothing but this muddy stream muttering like distant thunder, and forming toward the west a great curve, above which rose the solid mass of the forest of Pont Brillant dominated by its immense castle.

Suddenly reduced to enforced inaction, David felt his strong and valiant soul bow beneath the weight of a great despair.

Against this despair he vainly struggled, hoping that perhaps Frederick had not resolved upon this terrible step. He even went so far as to attribute the disappearance of the young man to a schoolboy's trick.

Alas! David did not keep this illusion long; a sudden blast of wind which blew violently along the current of the river brought almost to David's feet, as it rolled and tossed it upon the sand, a cap of blue cloth bound with a little Scotch border, which Frederick had worn that morning.

"Unhappy child!" exclaimed David, his eyes full of tears, "and his mother, his mother! oh, this is terrible!"

Suddenly he heard, above the roar of the waters, and brought by the wind, a long cry of distress.

Remounting at once the bank opposite the wind which brought this cry to his ears, David ran with all his might in the direction of the call.

Suddenly he stopped.

These words, uttered with a heartrending cry, reached his ear:

"My mother! oh, my mother!"

A hundred steps before him, David perceived, almost at the same time, in the middle of the surging waters, the head of Frederick, livid! frightful! his long hair matted on his temples, his eyes horribly dilated, while his arms, in a last struggle, moved convulsively above the abyss.

Then the preceptor saw no more, save a wider, deeper bubbling in the spot where he had discovered the body.

A light of hope, nevertheless, illumined David's manly face, but feeling the imminence of the peril and the danger of a blind precipitation, — for he had need of all his skill and all his strength, and, too, of all possible freedom from restraint, — he had the self-possession, after having thrown off his coat and vest, to take off his cravat, his stockings, and even his suspenders.

All this was executed with a sort of deliberate quickness which permitted David, while he was removing his garments, to follow with an attentive eye the current of the river, and coolly to calculate how far Frederick would be carried by the current. He calculated correctly. He saw soon, at a little distance, and toward the middle of the river, Frederick's long hair lifted by the waves, and the skirt of his hunting jacket floating on the water.

Then all disappeared again.

The moment had come.

Then David with a firm and sure gaze measured the distance, threw himself in the stream, and began to swim straight to the opposite shore, estimating, and with reason, that in cutting the breadth of the river, keeping count of the drift, he ought to reach the middle of the Loire a little before the current would carry Frederick's body there.

David's foresight made no mistake; he had already gained the middle of the stream when he saw at his left,

drifting between two waves, the body of Madame Bastien's son, entirely unconscious.

Seizing Frederick's long hair with one hand, he began to swim with the other hand, and reached the shore by means of the most heroic efforts, tortured every moment with the thought that perhaps, after all, he had rescued only a corpse.

At last he trod upon the shore. Robust and agile, he took the young man in his arms and laid him on the turf, about a hundred steps from the spot where he had left his garments.

Then, kneeling down by Frederick, he put his hand upon the poor boy's heart. It was not beating, his extremities were stiff and cold, his lips blue and convulsively closed, nor did one breath escape from them.

David, terrified, lifted the half-closed eyelid of the youth: his eye was immovable, dull and glassy.

The rain continued to flow in torrents over this inanimate body. David could no longer restrain his sobs. Alone, on this solitary shore, with no help near, when help was so much needed, — powerful and immediate help, even if one spark of life still remained in the body before him!

David was looking around him, in desperate need, when at a little distance he saw a thick column of smoke rising from behind a projecting angle of the embankment, which, no doubt, hid some inhabited house from his sight.

To carry Frederick in his arms, and, in spite of his heavy burden, to run to this hidden habitation, was David's spontaneous act. When he had passed this angle, he perceived at a little distance one of the brick-kilns so numerous on the borders of the Loire, as brickmakers find in this latitude all the necessary materials of clay, sand, water, and wood.

Making use of his reminiscences of travel, David recalled the fact that the Indians inhabiting the borders

of the great lakes, often restore their half-drowned companions to life, and awaken heat and circulation of the blood, by means of large stones which are made hot,—a sort of drying-place, upon which they place the body while they rub the limbs with spirits.

The brickmakers came eagerly to David's assistance. Frederick, enveloped in a thick covering, was extended on a bed of warm bricks, and exposed to the penetrating heat which issued from the mouth of the oven. A bottle of brandy, offered by the head workman, was used in rubbing. For some time David doubted the success of his efforts. Nevertheless some little symptoms of sensibility made his heart bound with hope and joy.

An hour after having been carried to the brick-kiln, Frederick, completely restored, was still so feeble, notwithstanding his consciousness, that he was not able to utter a word, although many times he looked at David with an expression of tenderness and unspeakable gratitude.

The preceptor and his pupil were in the modest chamber of the master workman, who had returned to his work near the embankment, and with his labourers was observing the level of the stream, which had not reached such a height in many years, for the inhabitants of these shores were always filled with fear at the thought of an overflow of the Loire.

David had just administered a warm and invigorating drink to Frederick, when the youth said, in a feeble voice:

"M. David, it is to you that I shall owe the happiness of seeing my mother again!"

"Yes, you will see her again, my child," replied the preceptor, pressing the son's hands in his own, "but why did you not think that to kill yourself was to kill your mother?"

"I thought of that too late. Then I felt myself lost,

and I cried, 'My mother!' when I should have cried, 'Help!'"

"Fortunately, that supreme cry I heard, my poor child. But now that you are calm, I implore you, tell me—"

Then, interrupting himself, David added:

"No, after what has passed, I have no right to question you. I shall wait for a confession which I wish to owe only to your confidence."

Frederick felt David's delicacy, for it was evident that his preceptor did not desire to abuse the influence given by a service rendered, by forcing a confidence from him.

Then he said, with tears in his eyes:

"M. David, life was a burden to me. I judged of the future by the past, and I wished to end it. Yet, that night, when during my mother's sleep I bade her farewell, my heart was broken. I thought of the sorrow that I would cause her in killing myself, and for a moment I hesitated, but I said to myself, 'My life will cost her more tears perhaps than my death,' and so I decided to put an end to it. This morning I asked her to forgive all the grief I had caused her, I also asked you to forgive me for the wrongs I had done to you, M. David. I did not wish to carry with me the animadversion of anybody. To remove all suspicion I affected calmness, certain of finding during the day some means of escaping your watchfulness and that of my mother. Your invitation to go out this morning served my plans. I was acquainted with the country. I directed our walk toward a spot where I felt sure I could escape from you and from your assistance, and I do not know how it was possible for you to find a trace of me, M. David."

"I will tell you that, my child, but continue."

"The hurry, the eagerness of my flight, the noise of the wind and the waters, seemed to intoxicate me, and then, on the horizon, I saw rise up before me, like an

apparition, the—". Here a light flush coloured Frederick's cheeks, and he did not finish his sentence.

David mentally supplied it, and said to himself:

"This unhappy child, in his moment of desperation, saw, as it commanded the shore of the river from afar, the castle of Pont Brillant."

After a short silence, Frederick continued:

"As I told you, M. David, I seemed intoxicated, almost mad, for I do not recollect at what spot on the river I threw myself in. The cold in the water seized me, I thought I was going to die, and then I was afraid. Then the thought of my mother came back to me. I seemed to see her, as in a dream, throw herself upon my cold, dead body. I did not want to die, and I cried, 'My mother! my mother!' as I tried to save myself, for I know very well how to swim; but the cold made me numb, and I felt myself sinking to the bottom. As I heard the river roar above my head I made a desperate effort, and came to the surface of the water, and then I lost consciousness until I found myself here, M. David, —here where you have brought me,—saved me as if I were your child,—here, where my first thought has been of my mother."

And Frederick, fatigued by the emotion of this recital, leaned his elbow on the bed where they had carried him, and remained silent, his head resting on his hand.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE conversation between David and Frederick was interrupted by the brickmaker, who entered the chamber, looking very much frightened. "Monsieur," said he, hurriedly, to David, "the cart is ready. Go quick."

"What is the matter?" asked David.

"The Loire is still rising, monsieur. Before two hours all my little furniture and effects will be swept away."

"Do you fear an overflow?"

"Perhaps, monsieur, for the rising of the waters is becoming frightful, and, if the Loire overflows, to-morrow nothing will be seen of my brick-kiln but the chimneys. So, for the sake of prudence, I must move you out. The cart which takes you home, will, on its return, carry my furniture away."

"Come, my child," said David to Frederick, "have courage. You see we have not a moment to lose."

"I am ready, M. David."

"Fortunately our clothes are dry, thanks to this hot furnace. Lean on me, my child."

As they left the house, Frederick said to the brickmaker:

"Pardon me, sir, for not being able to thank you better for your kind attention, but I will return."

"May Heaven bless you, my young gentleman, and grant that you may not find a mass of rubbish when you return to this place, instead of this house."

David, without Frederick's knowledge, gave two

gold pieces to the brickmaker, as he said, in a low voice:

"That is for the cart."

A few minutes elapsed, and the son of Madame Bastien left the brick-kiln with David in the rustic conveyance filled with a thick layer of straw, and covered over with a cloth, for the rain continued to fall in torrents.

The cart driver, wrapped in a wagoner's coat, and seated on one of the shafts, urged the gait of the horse, that trotted slowly and heavily.

David insisted that Frederick should lie down in the cart, and lean his head on his knees; thus seated in the back of the cart, he held the youth in a half embrace, and watched over him with paternal solicitude.

"My child," said he, carefully wrapping Frederick in the thick covering loaned by the brickmaker, "are you not cold?"

"No, M. David."

"Now, let us agree upon facts. Your mother must never know what has happened this morning. We will say, shall we not, that, surprised by a beating rain, we obtained this cart with great difficulty? The brickmaker thinks you fell in the water by imprudently venturing too near the slope of the embankment. He has promised me not to noise abroad this accident, the reports of which might frighten your mother. Now, that being agreed upon, we will think of it no more."

"What kindness! what generosity! You think of everything. You are right; my mother must not know that you have saved my life at the risk of your own, and yet—"

"What your mother ought to know, my dear Frederick, what she ought to see, is that I have kept the promise that I made to her this morning, for time presses."

"What promise?"

"I promised her to cure you."

"Cure me!" and Frederick bowed his head with grief. "Cure me!"

"And this cure must be accomplished this morning."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that in an hour, upon our arrival at the farm, you must be the Frederick of former times, the glory and pride of your mother."

"M. David!"

"My child, the moments are numbered, so listen to me. This morning, at the time you disappeared, I said to you, 'I know the cause of your illness.'"

"You did say that to me, truly, M. David."

"Well, now, the cause is envy!"

"Oh, my God!" murmured Frederick, overwhelmed with shame, and trying to slip away from David's embrace.

But the latter pressed Frederick all the more tenderly to his heart, and said, quickly:

"Lift up your head, my child, — there is no need for shame, envy is an excellent quality."

"Envy an excellent quality!" exclaimed Frederick, sitting up and staring at David with bewildered astonishment. "Envy!" repeated he, shuddering. "Ah, monsieur, you do not know what it produces."

"Hatred? so much the better."

"So much the better! but hatred in its turn —"

"Gives birth to vengeance, so much the better still."

"M. David," said the young man, falling back on his straw couch with sadness, "you are laughing at me, and yet —"

"Laughing at you, poor child!" said David, in a voice full of emotion, as he drew Frederick back to him, and pressed him to his breast with affection. "I laugh at you! do not say that. To me, more than to any one else, grief is sacred. I laugh at you. You do not know then, at first sight of you, I was filled with compassion,

with tenderness, because, you see, Frederick, I had a young brother about your age — "

And David's tears flowed, until, choked with emotion, he was obliged to keep silent.

Frederick's tears flowed also, and he in his turn embraced David, looking at him with a heartbroken expression, as if he wished to ask pardon for making him weep.

David understood him.

"Be calm, my child; these tears, too, have their sweetness. Well, the brother I speak of, this young beloved brother, who made my joy and my love, I lost. That is why I felt for you such a quick and keen interest, that is why I wish to return you to your mother as you were in the olden time, because it is to return you to happiness."

The accent, the countenance of David, as he uttered these words, were of such a melancholy, pathetic sweetness that Frederick, more and more affected, answered, timidly:

"Forgive me, M. David, for having thought you were laughing at me, but — "

"But what I said to you seemed so strange, did it not, that you could not believe that I was speaking seriously?"

"That is true."

"So it ought to be, nevertheless my words are sincere, and I am going to prove it to you."

Frederick fixed on David a look full of pain and eager curiosity.

"Yes, my child, envy, in itself, is an excellent quality; only you, up to this time, have applied it improperly, — you have envied wickedly instead of envying well."

"Envy well! Envy an excellent quality!" repeated Frederick, as if he could not believe his ears. "Envy, frightful envy, which corrodes, which devours, which kills!"

"My poor child, the Loire came near, just now, being your tomb. Had that misfortune happened, would not your mother have cried, 'Oh, the accursed river which kills,—accursed river which has swallowed up my son!'"

"Alas, M. David!"

"And if these fears of inundation are realised, how many despairing hearts will cry, 'Oh, accursed river! our houses are swept away, our fields submerged.' Are not these maledictions just?"

"Only too just, M. David."

"Yes; and yet this river so cursed fertilises its shores. It is the wealth of the cities by which it flows. Thousands of boats, laden with provisions of all sorts, plough its waves; this river so cursed accomplishes truly a useful mission, that God has given to everything he has created, because to say that God has created rivers for inundation and disaster would be a blasphemy. No, no! It is man, whose ignorance, whose carelessness, whose egotism, whose greed, and whose disdain change the gifts of the Creator into plagues."

Frederick, struck with his preceptor's words, listened to him with increasing interest.

"Just now, even," continued David, "unless heat from the fire had penetrated your benumbed limbs, you would, perhaps, have died, yet how horrible are the ravages of fire! Must we curse it and its Creator? What more shall I say to you? Shall we curse steam, which has changed the face of the earth, because it has caused so many awful disasters? No, no! God has created forces, and man, a free agent, employs those forces for good or for evil. And as God is everywhere the same in his omnipotence, it is with passions as with elements; no one of them is bad in itself, they are levers. Man uses them for good or for evil, according to his own free will. So, my child, your troubles date from your visit to the castle of Pont Brillant, do they not?"

"Yes, M. David."

"And you felt envy, keenly and deeply, did you not, when you compared the obscurity of your name and your poor, humble life with the splendid life and illustrious name of the young Marquis of Pont Brillant?"

"It is only too true."

"Up to that point, these sentiments were excellent."

"Excellent?"

"Excellent! You brought with you from the castle living and powerful forces; they ought, wisely directed, to have given the widest range to the development of your faculties. Unhappily, these forces have burst in your inexperienced hands, and have wounded you, poor dear child! Thus, to return to yourself, all your pure and simple enjoyments were destroyed by the constant remembrance of the splendours of the castle; then, in your grievous, unoccupied covetousness, you were forced to hate the one who possessed all that you desired; then vengeance."

"You know!" cried Frederick, in dismay.

"I know all, my child."

"Ah, M. David, pardon, I pray you," murmured Frederick, humiliated, "it was remorse for that base and horrible act that led me to think of suicide."

"I believe you, my child, and now that explains to me your unconquerable dejection since I arrived at your mother's house. You meditated this dreadful deed?"

"I thought of it for the first time, the evening of your arrival."

"This suicide was a voluntary expiation. There are more profitable ones, Frederick, my dear boy. Besides, I am certain that if envy was the germ of your hatred toward Raoul de Pont Brillant, the terrible scene in the forest was brought about by circumstances that I am ignorant of, and which ought to extenuate your culpable act."

Frederick hung his head in silence.

"Of that we will speak later," said David. "Now, let us see, my child; what did you envy the most in the young Marquis of Pont Brillant? His riches? So much the better. Envy them ardently, envy them sincerely, and in this incessant, energetic envy, you will find a lever of incalculable power. You will overcome all obstacles. By means of labour, intelligence, and probity, you will become rich. Why not? Jacques Lafitte was poorer than you are. He wished to be rich, and he became a millionaire twenty times over. His reputation is without a stain, and he always extended a hand to poverty, always favoured and endowed honest, courageous work. How many similar examples I could cite you!"

Frederick at first looked at his preceptor with profound surprise; then, beginning to comprehend the significance of his words, he put his hands on his forehead, as if his mind had been dazzled by a sudden light.

David continued:

"Let us go farther. Did the wealth of the marquis fill your heart only with covetous desire, instead of a sentiment of hatred and revolt against a society where some abound with superfluous possession, while others die for want of the necessaries of life? Very well, my child, that is an excellent sentiment; it is sacred and religious, because it inspired the Fathers of the Church with holy and avenging words. So, at the voice of great revolutions, the divine principle of fraternity, of human equality, has been proclaimed. Yes," added David, with a bitter sadness, "but proclaimed in vain. Priests, denying their humble origin, have become accomplices of wealth and power in the hands of kings, and have said to the people, 'Fate has devoted you to servitude, to misery, and to tears, on this earth.' Was not this a blasphemy against the fatherly goodness of the Creator, — a base desertion of the cause of the disinherited? But in our day this cause has valiant defenders, and

blessed are these sentiments that the sight of wealth inspires in you, if it throws you among the people of courage who fight for the imperishable cause of equality and human brotherhood."

"Oh!" cried Frederick, with clasped hands, his face radiant, and his heart throbbing with generous enthusiasm, "I understand, I understand."

"Let us see," pursued David, with increasing animation; "for what else did you envy this young marquis? The antiquity of his name? Envy it, envy it, by all means. You will have what is better than an ancient name; you will make your own name illustrious, and more widely celebrated than that of Pont Brillant. Art, letters, war! how many careers are open to your ambition! And you will win reputation. I have studied your works; I know the extent of your ability, when it is increased tenfold by the might of a determined and noble emulation."

"My God! my God!" cried Frederick, with enthusiasm, his eyes filled with tears, "I cannot tell what change has come over me. The darkness of night has been turned to day,—the day of the past, and even brighter than the past. Oh, my mother! my mother!"

"Let us go on," continued David, unwilling to leave the least doubt in Frederick's mind; "does the envy you feel when you hear the ancient name of Pont Brillant manifest itself by a violent hatred of aristocratic tradition, always springing up, sometimes feudal, and sometimes among the citizenship? Exalt this envy, my child. Jean Jacques, in protesting against the inequality of material conditions, was sublimely envious, and our fathers, in destroying the privileges of the monarchy, were heroically, immortally envious."

"Oh!" exclaimed Frederick, "how my heart beats at your noble words, M. David! What a revelation! What was killing me, I realise now, was a cowardly, barren envy. Envy for me was indolence, despair,

death. Envy ought to be action, hope, and life. In my impotent rage I only knew how to curse myself, others, and my own nonentity. Envy ought to give me the desire and strength to come out of my obscurity, and I will come out of it."

"Good! good! dear, brave child!" exclaimed David, in his turn, pressing Frederick to his breast. "Oh, I was certain I could cure you! An easy task with a generous nature like yours, so long cherished by the most admirable of mothers. Tender and excellent heart!" added he, no longer able to restrain his tears. "This morning, as you were about to drown, your last cry was, 'My mother! my mother!' You are born again to hope and life, and your first cry is still, 'My mother! my mother!'"

"I owe you my life," murmured Frederick, responding to the ardent embrace of his preceptor. "I owe you the life of my body as well as the life of my soul, M. David."

"Frederick, my child," said David, with inexpressible emotion, "call me your friend. That name I deserve now, do I not? It will replace the sweet and cherished name I can never hear again, — my brother!"

"Oh, my friend!" cried Frederick, with exaltation, "and you will see me worthy of the name of friend."

A moment of silence succeeded this outburst of sentiment, as David and Frederick held each other in close embrace.

The preceptor was the first to speak.

"Now, my dear child, I must appeal to your candour on a last and important matter. It may be severe, even relentless to me, but not unjust. Tell me, if —"

David could not finish. Entirely absorbed in their conversation, the preceptor and his pupil had not noticed the route, until the cart suddenly stopped a short distance from the farm gate.

Marie Bastien, greatly distressed at the prolonged

absence of her son, had been standing long under the rustic porch of her house, eagerly looking for his return.

At the sight of the covered cart, as it approached the farm, an inexplicable presentiment told the young woman that her son was there. Then, divided between fear and joy, she ran to meet the cart, and exclaimed:

"Frederick, is it you?"

David was interrupted in his remarks, and the cart stopped.

With one bound, the son of Madame Bastien leaped from the cart, threw himself on his mother's neck, covered it with kisses and tears, as he cried, with a voice broken by sobs:

"Mother, saved! No more trouble! saved, mother, saved!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

At these words of Frederick, "Saved, mother, saved," Marie Bastien looked at her son with mingled feelings of joy and surprise; already he seemed another person, almost transfigured, his head lifted, his smile radiant, his look inspired; his beautiful eyes were illuminated by an inward joy; the young mother was amazed. Scarcely had her son cried, "Saved," when Marie divined by David's attitude, his countenance, and the serenity of his face, that he had brought Frederick back to her, truly regenerated.

What means, what miracle could have produced so rapid and so unexpected a result? Marie did not question herself. David had given Frederick back to her as he used to be, so she said. Then, in an almost religious outburst of gratitude, she threw herself at David's feet; when he extended his hands to raise her, Marie seized them, pressed them passionately in her own, and cried in a voice trembling with all the emotions of maternal love:

"My life, my whole life, M. David, you have given me back my son!"

"Oh, my mother! Oh, my friend!" cried Frederick.

And, with an irresistible embrace, he pressed both Marie and David to his heart; David, sharing the impulsive joy of the young man, united with him in the same long caress.

Madame Bastien was not informed of the danger which her son had incurred that morning. Frederick and David removed their damp clothing, and then rejoined Madame

Bastien, who, plunged in a sort of ecstasy, was wondering how David had wrought the miracle of Frederick's cure.

At the sight of each other, the mother and son renewed their demonstrations of affection, and in this ineffable embrace, the young woman sought the glance of David, almost involuntarily, as if to associate him with her maternal caresses, and to render him thanks for the happiness she enjoyed.

Frederick, looking around him, appeared to contemplate every object in the little library with affection.

"Mother," said he, after a moment of silence, with a smile full of charm, "you will think I am silly, but it seems to me I cannot tell the time since I entered this room, so long it seems, since the evening we went to the castle of Pont Brillant. Our books, our drawings, our piano, even my old armchair in which I used to work, seem like so many friends that I have met again after a long absence."

"I understand you, Frederick," said Madame Bastien, smiling. "We are like the sleepers in the story of the 'Sleeping Beauty.' Our sleep, not so long as hers, has lasted five months. Bad dreams have disturbed it, but we awake as happy as we were before we went to sleep, do we not?"

"Happier, mother!" added Frederick, taking David's hand. "At our awakening, we found one friend more."

"You are right, my child," said the young mother, giving David a look beaming with rapture.

Then, seeing Frederick open the glass door which led to the grove, she added:

"What are you going to do? The rain has stopped, but the weather is still overcast and misty."

"The weather overcast and misty?" cried Frederick, going out of the house and looking at the century-old grove, with delight. "Oh, mother, can you say the weather is gloomy? Well, I must seem foolish to you,

but our dear old grove looks to me as bright and smiling as it does under the sun of springtime."

The young man did appear to be born again; his features expressed such true, radiant happiness, that his mother could only look at him in silence. She saw him again as handsome, as sprightly, as joyous as formerly, although he was pale and thin, and yet every moment his cheeks would flush with some sweet emotion.

David, for whom every word of Frederick had a significance, enjoyed this scene intensely.

Suddenly the young man stopped a moment as if in a dream, before a group of wild thorns which grew on the edge of the grove; after some moments of reflection, he sought his mother's eyes, and said to her, no longer cheerful, but with a sweet melancholy:

"Mother, in a few words, I am going to tell you of my cure. So," added he turning to David, "you will see that I have profited from your teaching, my friend."

For the first time, Marie noticed that her son called David his friend. The satisfaction she felt at this tender familiarity was easily read on her countenance, as Frederick continued:

"Mother, it was M. David who asked me to call him, hereafter, my friend. He was right; it would have been difficult for me to have said 'M. David' any longer; now, mother, listen to me well, — do you see that clump of blackthorn?"

"Yes, my child."

"Nothing seems more useless than this thorn with its darts as sharp as steel, — does it, mother?"

"You are right, my child."

"But let our good old André, our gardener and chief of husbandry, insert under the bark of this wild bush a little branch of a fine pear-tree, and you will see this thorn soon transformed into a tree laden with flowers, and afterward with delicious fruit. And yet, mother, it is always the same root, sucking the same sap from the

same soil. Only this sap, this power, is utilised. Do you comprehend?"

"Admirably, my child. It is important that forces or powers should be well employed, instead of remaining barren or injurious."

"Yes, madame," answered David, exchanging a smile of intelligence with Frederick, "and to follow this dear child's comparison, I will add that it is the same with those passions considered the most dangerous and most powerful, because they are the most deeply implanted in the heart of man. God has put them there; do not tear them out; only graft this thorny wild stock, as Frederick has said, and make it flower and fructify by means of the sap which the Creator has put in them."

"That reminds me, M. David," said the young woman, impressed with this reasoning, "that in speaking of hatred, you have told me that there were hatreds which were even noble, generous, and heroic."

"Well, mother," said Frederick, resolutely, "envy, like hatred, can become fruitful, heroic, — sublime."

"Envy!" exclaimed Marie Bastien.

"Yes, envy, because the malady which was killing me was envy!"

"You, envious, you?"

"Since our visit to the castle of Pont Brillant, the sight of those wonders —"

"Ah!" interrupted Marie Bastien, suddenly enlightened by this revelation, and shuddering, so to speak, with retrospective fear. "Ah, now I understand all, unhappy child!"

"Happy child, mother, because this envy, for want of culture, has been a long time as black and cruel as the thorn of which we were speaking. Just now, our friend," added Frederick, turning to David, with an ineffable smile of tenderness and gratitude, "yes, our friend has grafted this envy with brave emulation, generous ambition, and you shall see the fruits of it, mother; you shall

see that by dint of courage and labour, I will make your and my name illustrious, — this humble name whose obscurity is galling to me. Oh, glory! renown! my mother, what a brilliant future! To enable you to say with joy, with pride, 'This is my son!'"

"My child, oh, my beloved child!" exclaimed Marie, in a transport of joy. "I now comprehend the cure, as I have comprehended the disease."

Then turning to the preceptor she could only say:

"M. David! Oh, M. David!"

And tears, sobs of joy, forbade her utterance.

"Yes, thank him, mother," continued Frederick, carried away by emotion. "Love him, cherish him, bless him, for you do not know what goodness, what delicacy, what lofty and manly reason, what genius he has shown in accomplishing the cure of your son. His words are engraven upon my heart ineffaceably; they have recalled me to life, to hope, and to all the elevated sentiments I owe to you. Oh! thanks should be given to you, mother, for it is your hand still which chose my saviour, this good genius who has returned me to you, worthy of you."

There are joys impossible to describe. Such was the end of this long day for David, Marie, and her son.

Frederick was too full of gratitude and admiration toward his friend not to wish to share his sentiments with his mother; the words of his preceptor were so present to his thought that he repeated to her, word for word, all their long conversation.

Very often Frederick was on the point of confessing to his mother that he owed to David, not only the life of his soul, but the life of his body. He was prevented only by the promise made to his friend, and the fear of undue excitement in the mind of his mother.

As to Marie, taking in at one glance the conduct of David, from the first hour of his devotion to the hour

of unhoped for triumph; recalling his gentleness, his simplicity, his delicacy, his generous perseverance, crowned with such dazzling success, — a success obtained only by the ascendency of a great heart, and an elevated mind, — what she felt for David would be difficult to express; it was mingled affection, tenderness, admiration, respect, and especially a passionate gratitude, for she owed to David, not only the cure of Frederick, but that future to which she looked forward, as illustrious and glorious, nothing doubting, now, that Frederick, excited by the ardour of his own ambition, directed by the wisdom and skill of David, would one day achieve a brilliant destiny.

From this moment, David and Frederick became inseparable in Marie's heart, and without taking precise account of her feelings, the young woman felt that her life and that of her son were identified with the life of David.

We leave to the imagination the delightful evening that passed in the library with the mother, the son, and the preceptor. Only as certain joys as much as grief oppress the heart, and demand, so to speak, digestion in reflection, Marie and her son and David, separated earlier than usual, saying "to-morrow" with the sweet anticipation of a joyous day.

David went to his little chamber. He had need of being alone.

The words that Frederick had uttered in the transport of his gratitude, as he spoke to his mother of the preceptor, — "Love him, cherish him, bless him," — words to which Marie Bastien had responded by a glance of inexpressible gratitude, became the joy and the sorrow of David.

He had felt the inmost fibres of his heart thrill many times, in meeting the large blue eyes of Marie, as they welled over with maternal solicitude; he had trembled

in seeing her lavish caresses upon her son, and he could but dream of the wealth of ardent affection which this pure and at the same time passionate nature possessed.

"What love like hers," said he to himself, "if there is a place in her heart for any other sentiment besides that of maternity! How beautiful she was to-day, what bewitching expressions animated her face! Oh! I feel it, now is my hour of peril, of struggle, and of suffering! Yes, the tears of Marie are consecrated! I felt it was a sacrilege to lift my eyes to this young weeping mother, so beautiful in her tears. Yet she is now radiant with the joy she owes to me, and in her ingenuous gratitude, her tender eyes sought me whenever she looked upon Frederick. And think of what her son said to her, — 'Love him, cherish him, bless him,' — and the expressive silence, the pathetic glance of this adorable woman, perhaps, may make me believe some day — "

David, not daring to pursue this thought, resumed with sadness:

"Oh, yes, the hour of suffering, the hour of resignation has come. Confess my love, or let Marie suspect it, when she owes so much to me? Lead her to believe that my devotion to her concealed another design? Lead her to believe that, instead of yielding spontaneously to the interest this poor child inspired, — thanks to the memory of my lamented brother, — I made a cloak, a pretext of this interest to surprise the maternal confidence of a young woman? In fact, to lose, in her eyes, the only merit of my devotion, my sudden loyalty, — indiscreet, yes, very indiscreet, I see it all now, — alas, shall I degrade myself in the eyes of Marie? never! never!

"Between her and me will be always her son.

"To fly from this love, shall I leave the house where this love is always growing?

"No, I cannot do so yet.

"Frederick to-day, in the intoxication of this revela-

tion which has changed his gloomy despair into a will full of faith and enthusiasm, — Frederick, suddenly lifted from the abyss where he had fallen, experiences the delight of the prisoner all at once restored to liberty and light, yet does not this cure need to be established? Will it not be necessary to moderate the impetuosity of this young and ardent imagination in its enthusiastic conceptions of the future?

"And then, it may be, the first exultation passed, — to-morrow perhaps, — Frederick, on the other hand, more self-reliant, and better comprehending the generous efforts necessary to reach the fountainhead of envy, will remember with more bitterness than ever the dreadful deed that he wished to commit, — his desire to murder Raoul de Pont Brillant. A fruitful and generous expiation, then, is the only thing which can appease this remorse which has tempted Frederick to commit suicide.

"No, no, I cannot abandon this child yet; I love him too sincerely, I have the completion of my work too much at heart.

"I must remain.

"Remain, and each day live this intimate, solitary life with Marie, — she who came so innocently to this chamber in the middle of the night in a dishevelled state, the recollection of which thrills me, even in the sleep where I vainly seek for rest."

To this dangerous sleep David yielded, nevertheless, as the emotions and fatigues of the day had been very exhausting.

The day was just breaking.

David started out of sleep, as he heard several violent knocks at his door, and recognised the voice of Frederick, who said:

"My friend, open, open your door, please!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DAVID hastened to put on his clothes and opened the door. He saw Frederick, his face pale and distorted with fright.

"My child, what is the matter?"

"Ah, my friend, what a misfortune!"

"A misfortune?"

"The Loire —"

"Well?"

"The inundation we were speaking of yesterday at the brickmaker's —"

"An overflow, — that is frightful! What a disaster, my God, what a disaster!"

"Come, come, my friend, you can no longer see the valley at the edge of the forest; it is all a lake of water!"

David and Frederick descended precipitately, and found Madame Bastien in the library. She also had risen in haste. Marguerite and the gardener were groaning in terror.

"The water is gaining on us."

"The house will be swept away," they cried.

"And the poor farmers in the valley," said Madame Bastien, her eyes filled with tears. "Their houses, so isolated, are perhaps already submerged, and the miserable people in them, surprised in the night by the overflow, cannot get away."

"Then, madame," said David, "we must at once go to the rescue of the valley people. Here there is no danger."

"But the water is already within a mile and a half, M. David," cried old Marguerite.

"And it continues to rise," added André.

"Be calm, madame," answered David. "I have, since my stay here, gone through the country enough to be certain that the overflow will never reach this house, — the level of the land is too high. You can set your mind at rest."

"But the farmhouses in the valley," cried Frederick.

"The overflow has had time to reach the house of Jean François, the farmer, a good, excellent man," cried Marie. "His wife, his children are lost."

"Where is this farmhouse, madame?" asked David.

"More than a mile from here in the flats. You can see it from the edge of the forest which overlooks the fields. Alas! you can see it if the overflow has not swept it away."

"Come, madame, come," said David, "we must run to find out where it is."

In an instant, Frederick, his mother, and David followed by the gardner and Marguerite arrived at the edge of the forest, a spot much higher than the valley.

What a spectacle!

As far as the eye could reach in the north and the east, one saw only an immense sheet of yellow, muddy water, cut at the horizon by a sky overcast with dark clouds rapidly hurried along by a freezing wind. At the west the forest of Pont Brillant was half submerged, while the tops of a few poplars on the plain could be discerned here and there in the middle of a motionless and limitless sea.

This devastation, slow and silent as the tomb, was even more terrible than the brilliant ravages of a conflagration.

For a moment the spectators of this awful disaster stood still in mute astonishment.

David, the first to recover from this unavailing grief, said to Madame Bastien:

"Madame, I will return in a moment."

Some minutes after he ran back, bringing an excellent field-glass that had served him in many a voyage.

"The fog on the water prevents my distinguishing objects at a great distance, madame," said David to Marie. "In what direction is the farmhouse you spoke of just now?"

"In the direction of those poplars down there on the left, M. David."

The preceptor directed his field-glass toward the point designated, carefully observing the scene for some minutes, then he cried:

"Ah! the unfortunate creatures!"

"Heaven, they are lost!" said Marie, quickly.

"The water has reached half-way up the roof of the house," said David. "They are on the roof clinging to the chimney. I see a man, a woman, and three children."

"My God!" cried Marie with clasped hands, falling on her knees with her eyes raised to heaven, "My God, help them, have pity on them!"

"And no means of saving them!" cried Frederick; "we can only groan over such a disaster."

"Poor Jean François, a good man," said André.

"To see his three little children die with him," sobbed Marguerite.

David, calm, grave, and silent, as was his habit in the hour of danger, struck his field-glass convulsively in the palm of his hand, and seemed to be lost in thought; all eyes were turned to him. Suddenly his brow cleared, and with that authority of accent and promptness of decision which distinguish the man made to command, he said to Marie:

"Madame, permit me to give orders here, the moments are precious."

"They will obey you as they obey me, M. David."

"André," called the preceptor, "get the cart and horse at once."

"Yes, M. David."

"On the pond not far from the house, I have seen a little boat; is it there still?"

"Yes, M. David."

"Is it light enough to be carried on the cart?"

"Certainly, M. David."

"Frederick and I will assist you in placing it there. Run and hitch up; we will join you."

André hurried to the stable.

"Now, madame," said David to Marie, "please have prepared immediately some bottles of wine and two or three coverings. We will carry them in the boat; for these poor people, if we succeed in saving them, will be dying of cold and want. Have some beds and a fire made ready, too, that every care can be given to them when we arrive. Now, Frederick, we will assist André, and go as quickly as possible to the pond."

While David hastily disappeared with Frederick, Madame Bastien and Marguerite eagerly executed David's orders.

The horse, promptly hitched to the cart, took David and Frederick to the pond.

"My friend," said the young man to his preceptor, his eyes glowing with ardour and impatience, "we will save these unfortunate people, will we not?"

"I hope so, my child, but the danger will be great; when we pass this stagnant water, we will enter the current of the overflow, and it must be as rapid as a torrent."

"Well, what matters danger, my friend?"

"We must know it to triumph over it, my child. Now, tell me," added David, with emotion, "do you not think that, in thus generously exposing your own life, you will more worthily expiate the dreadful deed you wished to commit, than by seeking a fruitless death in suicide?"

A passionate embrace on the part of Frederick made David see that he was understood.

The cart just at this moment crossed a highway in order to reach the pond in time.

A gendarme, urging his horse to a galop, arrived at full speed.

"Is the overflow still rising?" cried David to the soldier, making a sign to him with his hand to stop.

"The water is rising all the time, sir," replied the gendarme, panting for breath; "the embankments are just broken. There is thirty feet of water in the valley — the route to Pont Brillant is cut off — the only boat that we had for salvage has just capsized with those who manned it. All have perished, and I am hurrying to the castle for more men and boats."

And the soldier plunged his rowels into the horse, which was covered with foam, and galloped away.

"Oh!" cried Frederick, with enthusiasm, "we will arrive before the people from the castle, will we not?"

"You see, my child, envy has some good in it," said David, who penetrated the secret thought of Frederick.

The cart soon arrived at the pond. André, Frederick, and David easily placed the little boat on the conveyance. At the same time David, with that foresight which never forsook him, carefully examined the oars, and the tholes which serve to keep the oars in place.

"André," said he to the gardener, "have you a knife?"

"Yes, M. David."

"Give it to me. Now, you, Frederick, return to the house with André; hasten the speed of the horse as much as possible, for the water rises every minute, and will swallow up the poor people below."

"But you, my friend?"

"I see here some young branches of oak; I am going to cut them so as to repair the tholes of the boat; they are old, the green wood is stronger and more pliant. Go, go, I will join you in haste."

The cart drove away; the old horse, vigorously

belaboured with the whip, and smelling the house, as they say, began to trot. David chose the wood necessary for his work, soon joined the cart, which he followed on foot, as did Frederick, not willing to overburden the horse. As they walked, the preceptor gave the tholes a suitable shape; Frederick looked at him with surprise.

"You think of everything," said he.

"My dear child, when on my travels over the great lakes of America, I frequently saw terrible inundations. I have helped the Indians in several salvages and I learned then that a little precaution often spares one many perils. So I have prepared three sets of tholes, for it is probable we may break some, and as the sailor's proverb says: 'A broken thole, a dead oar.'"

"It is true that when an oar lacks a solid support, it becomes almost useless."

"And what would become of us in the middle of the gulf with one oar? We should be lost."

"That is true, my friend."

"Now we must prepare to row vigorously, for we shall encounter trees, and steep banks in roads and other obstructions which may give a violent jolt to our oars and perhaps break them. Have you no spare oars?"

"There is another one at the house."

"We will carry it with us, because, if we should lack an oar, the rescue of these poor people would become impossible and our loss certain. You row well, do you?"

"Yes, my friend, one of my greatest pleasures was to row mother across the pond."

"You will be at home with the oars then; I will sound the water and direct the boat by means of a boat-hook. I explain to you now my child, every essential point, as I shall not have time to address a word to you, when we are on the water. Do not let your oars drag. After each stroke of the oar, lift them horizontally; they might become entangled or break on some

obstacle between wind and water, which renders navigation so dangerous on these submerged lands."

"I will forget nothing, my friend; make yourself easy," replied Frederick, to whom the coolness and experience of David gave unlimited courage.

When the cart reached the house, David and Frederick met a great number of peasants weeping bitterly, and driving before them all kinds of animals. Some were walking by the side of wagons laden with furniture piled pell-mell, kitchen utensils, mattresses, clothing, barrels, sacks of grain, all snatched in haste from the devouring waves of the overflow.

Some women carried nursing children, others had little boys and girls on their backs, while the men were trying to guide the frightened beasts.

"Does the water continue to rise, my poor people?" asked David, without stopping, and walking along by their side.

"Alas, monsieur, it is still rising; the bridge of Blemur has been carried off by the waves," said one.

"There was already four feet of water in the village when we left it," said another.

"The great floats of wood in the basin of St. Pierre have been swept into the current of the valley," said a third.

"They came down like a thunderbolt, struck two large boats manned with sailors coming to aid the people, and capsized them."

"All those brave men were drowned," said another, "for the Loire at its highest water is not half as rapid as the current of the overflow."

"And those unhappy people below!" said Frederick, impatiently. "Shall we arrive in time? My God! Oh, if the men from the castle get there before we do!"

The cart was at the farm; while they were putting provisions and coverings in the little boat, David asked André for a hedging knife, and went to select a long branch of the ash-tree, from which he cut about ten feet, light,

supple, and easily handled. An iron hook, which had served as a pulley for a bucket, was solidly fastened to the end of this improvised instrument, which would answer to tow the boat from apparent obstacles, or to sustain it along the roof of the submerged house; the long well-rope was also laid in the little boat, as well as two or three light planks, solidly bound together, and capable of serving as a buoy of salvage in a desperate case.

David occupied himself with these details, with thoughtful activity, and a fruitfulness in expedients, which surprised Madame Bastien as much as it did her son. When all was ready, David looked attentively at each article, and said to André:

"Drive now as quick as possible to the shore; Frederick and I will join you, and will help you in unloading the boat and setting it afloat."

The cart, moving along the edge of the forest where stood David, Frederick, and his mother, took the direction of the submerged plain, which could be seen at a great distance. The slope being quite steep, the horse began to trot.

While the cart was on its way, David took the field-glass that he had left on one of the rustic benches in the grove, and looked for the farmhouse. The water was within two feet of the comb of the roof, where the farmer's family had taken refuge.

David laid his field-glass on the bench, and said in a firm voice to Frederick:

"My child, embrace your mother, and let us go; time presses."

Marie trembled in every limb, and turned deadly pale.

For a second there was in the soul of the young woman a terrible struggle between duty, which urged her to allow Frederick to accomplish a generous action at the risk of his life, and the voice of nature, which urged her to prevent her son's braving the danger of death. This

struggle was so painful that Frederick, who had not taken his eyes from his mother, saw her grow weak, frightened at the thought of losing the son now so worthy of her love.

So Marie, holding Frederick in her arms to prevent his departure, cried, with a heartrending voice:

"No, no, I cannot let him go!"

"Mother," said Frederick to her, in a low voice, "I once wished to kill, and there are people there whom I can save from death."

Marie was heroic.

"Go, my child; we will go together," said she.

And she took a step which indicated her desire to go with the boat.

"Madame," cried David, divining her purpose, "this is impossible!"

"M. David, I will not abandon my son."

"Mother!"

"Where you go, Frederick, I will go."

"Madame," answered David, "the boat can only hold five persons. There is a man, a woman, and three children to save; to accompany us in the boat is to force us to leave to certain death the father, the mother, and the children."

At these words, Madame Bastien said to her son, "Go then alone, my child."

And the mother and son mingled their tears and their kisses in a last embrace.

Frederick, as he left his mother's arms, saw David, in spite of his firmness, weeping.

"Mother!" said Frederick, showing his friend to her. "Look at him."

"Save his body as you have saved his soul!" cried the young woman, pressing David convulsively against her palpitating bosom. "Bring him back to me or I shall die."

David was worthy of the chaste and sacred embrace

of this young woman, who saw her son about to brave death.

It was a weeping sister that he pressed to his heart.

Then, taking Frederick by the hand, he darted in the direction of the cart; both gave a last look at Madame Bastien, whose strength was exhausted, as she sank upon one of the rustic benches in the grove.

This attack of weakness past, Marie rose and stood, following her son and David with her eyes as long as she could see them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

In a quarter of an hour the little boat was lifted from the cart, and soon after was set afloat on the dead waters of the inundation.

"André, stay there with the cart," said the preceptor, "because the miserable people, to whose rescue we are going, will be altogether too feeble to walk to Madame Bastien's house."

"Well, M. David," said the old man.

And he added with emotion:

"Good courage, my poor M. Frederick."

"My child," said David, just as the boat was leaving the shore, "in order to be prepared for any emergency, do as I do. Take off your shoes and stockings, your coat and your cravat; throw your coat over your shoulders to prevent your taking cold. Whatever happens to me, do not concern yourself about me. I am a good swimmer, and in trying to save me, you would drown us both. Now, my child, at your oars, and row hard, but not too fast; husband your strength. I will be on the watch in front, and will sound the waters. Come now, with calmness and presence of mind, all will go well."

The boat now had left the shore.

Courage, energy, and the consciousness of the noble expiation he was about to attempt, supplied Frederick with all the strength that he had lost during his long illness of mind and body.

His beautiful features animated with enthusiasm, his

eyes fixed on David, watching for every order, the son of Madame Bastien rowed with vigour and precision. At each stroke of the oar, the little boat advanced rapidly and without obstruction.

David, standing in front, straightening his tall form to its utmost height, his head bare, his black hair floating in the wind, his eye sometimes fixed on the almost submerged farmhouse, and sometimes on objects which might prove an obstacle in their course, — cool, prudent and attentive, showed a calm intrepidity. For some moments the progress of the boat was unimpeded, but suddenly the preceptor called: "Hold oars!"

Frederick executed this order, and after a few seconds the boat stopped.

David, leaning over the craft in front, sounded with his boat-hook the spot where he had seen light bubbles rising to the surface, for fear the boat might break against some obstacle under the water.

In fact, David discovered that the boat was almost immediately over a mass of willow branches, in which the little craft might have become entangled if it had been going at its highest speed. Leaning then his boat-hook against a log he met in the water, David turned his boat out of the way of this perilous obstruction.

"Now, my child," said he, "row in front of you, turning a little to the left, so as to reach those three tall poplars you see down there, half submerged in the water. Once arrived there, we will enter the middle of the overflow's current, which we feel even here, although we are still in dead water."

At the end of a few minutes David called again:

"Hold oars!"

And with these words David hooked his boat-hook among the branches of one of the poplars toward which Frederick was rowing; these trees, thirty feet in height, were three-quarters submerged. Sustained by the boat-hook, the little craft remained immovable.

"What! we are going to stop, M. David?" cried Frederick.

"You must rest a moment, my child, and drink a few swallows of this wine."

Then David, with remarkable coolness, uncorked a bottle of wine, which he offered to his pupil.

"Stop to rest!" cried Frederick, "while those poor people are waiting for us!"

"My child, you are panting for breath, your forehead is covered with perspiration, your strength is being exhausted; I perceived it by the shaking of your oars. We will reach these people in time; the water is not rising any longer, I have seen by sure signs. We are going to need all our energy and all our strength. Now, five minutes' rest taken at the right time may ensure those persons' safety as well as our own. Come, drink a few swallows of wine."

Frederick followed this advice, and realised the benefit of it, for already, without having dared confess it to David, he felt in the joints of his arms that numbness and rigidity which always succeed too much fatigue and muscular tension.

During this period of enforced delay the preceptor and his pupil looked upon the scene around them with silent horror.

From the point where they were they commanded an immense extent of water, no longer dead, such as they had just passed over, but rapid, foaming, impetuous as the course of a torrent.

From this vast expanse of water arose such a roar that from one end of the little boat to the other Frederick and David were obliged to shout aloud, in order to hear each other.

In the distance a line of dark gray water was the only thing which marked the horizon.

About six hundred steps from the boat they saw the farmhouse.

The roof had almost completely disappeared under the waters, and human forms grouped around the chimney could be vaguely distinguished.

Every moment, at a little distance from the craft, protected from collision by the three poplars, which served as a sort of natural palisade, thanks to David's foresight, floated all kinds of rubbish, carried along on the current which the little boat was to cross in a few moments.

On one side, beams and girders, and fragments of carpentry proceeding from the crumbling buildings; on the other side, enormous haycocks and stacks of straw, lifted from their base and dragged solidly along by the waters, like so many floating mountains, submerging everything they encountered; again, gigantic trees, torn up by the roots, rushed rapidly by as lightly as bits of straw upon a babbling brook, while in their rear followed doors unloosed from their hinges, furniture, mattresses, and casks, and sometimes in the midst of these wrecks could be seen cattle, some drowned, others struggling above the abyss soon to disappear under it, and, in strange contrast, domestic ducks, instinctively following the other animals, floated over the water in undisturbed tranquillity. Elsewhere, heavy carts were whirled above the gulf, and sometimes sank under the irresistible shock of immense floats of wood a hundred feet long and twenty feet wide borne along with the drift.

It was in the midst of these floating perils, upon an impetuous and irresistible current, that David and Frederick were forced to direct their boat in order to reach the farmhouse.

Then the danger of the salvage was becoming more imminent.

Frederick felt it, and as he saw David survey the terrible scene with an expression of distress, he said, in a firm and serious tone:

"You were right, my friend, we shall soon need all

our strength and all our energy. This rest was necessary, but it seems cruel to take a rest with such a spectacle under our eyes."

"Yes, my child, courage is necessary even to take rest; blind recklessness does not see and does not try to see the danger, but true courage coolly looks at the chances. Hence, it generally triumphs over danger. If we had not taken some rest, we would certainly be dragged into the middle of the gulf that we are about to cross, and we would be destroyed."

Thus speaking, David examined with minute care the equipment of the boat and renewed one of the tholes, which had split under the pressure of Frederick's oar. For greater surety, David, by means of two knots of cord sufficiently loose, fastened the oars to the gunwale a little below their handle; in this way they could have free play, without escaping from Frederick's hands in the accident of a violent collision.

The rest of the five minutes had reached its end when Frederick, uttering an exclamation of involuntary surprise, became deathly pale, and could not conceal the distortion of his features.

David raised his head, followed the direction of Frederick's eyes, and saw what had alarmed his pupil.

As we have said, the inundation, without limit in the north and the east, was bounded in the west by the border of the forest of Pont Brillant, whose tall trees had disappeared half-way under the waters.

One of the woods of this forest, advancing far into the inundated valley, formed a sort of promontory above the sheet of water.

For some time, Frederick had observed, issuing from this promontory, so to speak, and rowing against the current, a long canoe, painted the colour of goat leather, and relieved by a wide crimson railing or guard.

On the benches, six oarsmen, wearing chamois skin jackets and crimson caps, were rowing vigorously; the

cockswain seated at the back, where he controlled the canoe, seemed to follow the orders of a young man, who, erect upon one of the benches, with one hand in the pocket of his mackintosh of a whitish colour, indicated with the index finger of the other hand a point which could be nothing else than the submerged farmhouse, as, in that part of the valley, no other building could be seen.

David's little boat was too far from this canoe to enable him to distinguish the features of the person who evidently directed the manœuvre, but from the expression of Frederick's countenance he did not doubt that the master of the bark was Raoul de Pont Brillant.

The presence of the marquis on the scene of the disaster was explained by the message that the gendarme, whom David met, had carried in haste to the castle, demanding boats and men.

At the sight of Raoul de Pont Brillant, whose presence affected Frederick so suddenly, David felt as much surprise as satisfaction; the meeting with the young marquis seemed providential, and, fixing a penetrating glance on his pupil, David said to him:

"My child, you recognise the Marquis de Pont Brillant?"

"Yes, my friend," answered the young man.

And he continued to follow, with a keen and restless eye the movements of the yawl, which, evidently, was trying to reach the submerged farmhouse, from which it was more distant than the little boat. However, the six oarsmen of the patrician craft were rapidly diminishing the distance.

"Come, Frederick," said David, in a firm voice, "the Marquis de Pont Brillant, like us is going to the help of the unfortunate farmer. It is brave and generous of him. Now is the time for you to envy, to be jealous of the young marquis indeed!"

"Oh, I will get there before he does!" exclaimed Frederick, with an indescribable exaltation.

"To your oars, my child! One last thought of your mother, and forward! The hour has come."

So saying, David disengaged his boat-hook from the entanglement of the branches of the poplar-trees.

The little boat, set in movement by the vigorous motion of the oars, in a few minutes arrived in the middle of the current it must cross in order to reach the farm-house.

CHAPTER XXX.

THEN began a terrible, obstinate struggle against the dangers threatened by the elements of nature.

While Frederick rowed with incredible energy, over-excited at the sight of the canoe of the marquis, on which from time to time he would cast a look of generous emulation, David, sitting in front of the boat, guarded it from shocks with an address and presence of mind which was marvellous.

Already he had approached the farmhouse near enough to see distinctly the unfortunate family clinging to the roof, when an enormous stack of straw, carried by the waters, advanced on the right of the boat, which presented to the obstacle its breadth in cutting the current.

"Double your strokes, Frederick!" cried David. "Courage! let us avoid that stack of straw."

The son of Madame Bastien obeyed.

Already the prow of the little boat had gone beyond the stack of straw, which was not more than ten steps distant, when the young man, stiffening his arm as he threw himself violently back, so as to give more power to his stroke, made too sudden a movement, and broke his right oar. Soon, the left oar forming a lever, the boat turned about, and, instead of her breadth, presented her prow to the stack, which threatened to engulf her beneath its weight.

David, surprised by the sudden jolt, lost for a moment his equilibrium, but had time to cry:

"Row firmly with the oar left to you."

Frederick obeyed more by instinct than by reflection. The little boat turned again, presented its breadth, and, half raised by the eddy around the spheroid mass which had already touched the prow, swung on the single oar as if it had been a pivot, thus describing a half circle around the floating obstruction, and escaping from it in such a way as to receive only a slight shock.

While all this was taking place with the rapidity of thought, David, seizing a spare oar from the bottom of the boat, fixed it in the thole, saying to Frederick, who was excited by the frightful danger he had just escaped:

"Take this new oar and go forward; the canoe is gaining on us."

Frederick seized the oar, at the same time throwing a glance on the craft of the young marquis.

It was going directly toward the farmhouse, standing in the current, while the little boat was cutting it crosswise.

So, supposing they were of equal speed, the two craft, whose course formed a right angle, would meet at the farmhouse.

But, as we have said, the canoe, although it ascended the current, being managed by six vigorous oarsmen, was considerably in advance, thanks to the accident to which the little boat had nearly fallen a victim.

Frederick, seeing the marquis precede him, reached such a degree of excitement that for a given time his natural strength was raised to an irresistible power, and enabled him to accomplish wonders.

One would have said that the son of Madame Bastien had communicated his feverish ardour to inanimate objects, and that the little craft trembled with impatience in its entire frame, while the oars seemed to receive not only motion, but life, with such precision and harmony did they obey Frederick's every movement.

David himself, surprised at this incredible energy, continued to watch in front of the little boat, casting a

radiant look on his pupil, whose heroic emulation he understood so well.

Suddenly Frederick uttered an exclamation of profound joy.

The little boat was only twenty-five steps from the farmhouse, while the yawl was still distant about a hundred steps.

Suddenly, prolonged cries of distress, accompanied by a terrible crash, rose above the sound of the roaring waters.

One of the gable ends of the farmhouse, undermined by the force of the current, fell down with a loud noise, and a part of the roof was giving way at the same time.

Then the family grouped around the chimney had no other support for their feet than some fragments of carpentry, the slow oscillations of which predicted their speedy fall.

In a few minutes, the gable end where the chimney was built, in its turn, sank into the abyss.

The unfortunate sufferers presented a heartrending picture, worthy of the painter of the Deluge.

The father standing half clothed, livid, his lips blue, his eye haggard, holding on to the tottering chimney with his left hand ; two of the eldest children, locked in each other's arms, he bore upon his shoulders; around his right wrist was wrapped a rope, which he had been able to fasten to the opposite side of the chimney; by means of this rope, which girded the loins of his wife, he supported her, and prevented her fall into the water; for the poor woman, paralysed by cold, fatigue, and terror, had lost almost all consciousness; maternal instinct enabled her to press her nursing infant in her rigid arms to her bosom, and, in her desperation, the better to hold it, she had caught between her teeth the woollen skirt of the child's dress, to which she clung with the tenacity of a convulsion.

The agony of these wretched beings had already lasted five hours. Overcome by terror, they seemed no longer to see or to hear.

When David, arriving within the range of the voice, called out to them, "Try to seize the rope that I throw to you!" there was no response. Those whom he had come to save seemed absolutely petrified.

Realising that the shipwrecked were often incapable of assisting in their own rescue, David acted promptly, for the gable end, as well as the remainder of the roof, threatened to sink in the abyss every moment.

The little boat, pushed by the current, was managed in such a way as to touch the ruins of the building on the side opposite to that most likely to fall; then, while Frederick, hanging on with both hands to a projecting beam, held the craft on the side of the roof, David, one foot on the prow, and the other on the unsteady rafters, took hold of the mother with a strong arm, and placed her and the child in the bottom of the boat. Then the intelligence of the poor people, stupefied by cold and fright, seemed suddenly to awaken.

Jean François, holding by one hand to the rope, handed his two children over into the arms of David and Frederick, and then descended himself into the little boat, and stretched himself out by the side of his wife and children under the warm covering, — all remaining as motionless as possible for fear of upsetting the craft in its passage to the dead waters. Scarcely had Frederick taken up his oars to row away from the ruins of the farmhouse, when the whole mass was engulfed.

The reflux caused by the sinking of this mass of ruins was so violent, that a tremendous surge lifted the little boat a moment, then, when it sank, Frederick discovered, about ten steps from him in the middle of a wave of spouting foam, the yawl of the marquis, turned half-way on its gunwale, and ready to capsize under the weight of an entanglement of carpentry and stones, for the canoe

had touched the farmhouse ruins just about the time of the final wreck.

Frederick, at the sight of the canoe's danger, suspended the motion of his oars an instant, and cried, as he turned around to David:

"What is to be done to help them? Must I—"

He did not finish.

He left his oars, and leaped to the front of the little boat, and plunged into the water.

To seize the oars so imprudently abandoned by Frederick and row with desperate energy to the spot where the young man had just disappeared was David's first movement; at the end of two minutes of inexpressible anguish, he saw Frederick rise above the gulf, swimming vigorously with one hand, and dragging a body after him.

With a few strokes of the oar, David joined his pupil.

The latter, seizing the prow of the little boat with the hand with which he had been swimming, sustained with the other hand, above the water, Raoul de Pont Brillant, pale, inanimate, and his face covered with blood.

The marquis, struck on the head by a piece of the wreck which came near sinking the yawl, had been, by the same violent blow, thrown into the water, while the frightened oarsmen were occupied in relieving the craft from the timber which encumbered it. The canoe had hardly recovered her equilibrium, when the coxswain, seeing that his master had disappeared, looked around the craft in consternation, and at last discovered the marquis as he was held by the rescuing hand of Frederick.

The six oarsmen soon gained the spot where the little boat lay, and took on board Raoul de Pont Brillant, who had fainted.

Frederick, with David's assistance, came out of the water, and entered the little boat, when the oarsmen from the castle cried out to him in terror:

"Take care! a float of wood!"

In fact, the floating mass, coming rapidly behind the little boat, had not been seen by David, who was entirely occupied with Frederick.

At this new danger the preceptor recovered his presence of mind; he threw his boat-hook on the canoe of the marquis, and by means of this support drew himself to her, and thus escaped the shock threatened by the float of wood.

"Ah, monsieur," said the coxswain of the oarsmen, while the little boat was lying some seconds by the side of the canoe, "what is the name of the courageous young man who has just saved the marquis?"

"The wound of the Marquis de Pont Brillant may be serious," said David, without answering the coxswain's question. "It is the most prudent thing to return to the castle without delay."

Then, disengaging the boat-hook from the canoe, so as to give freedom of action to the little boat, David said to Frederick, who with radiant countenance was throwing back his long hair dripping with water:

"To your oars, my child. God is with us. When we once reach the dead waters, we are safe."

God, as David had said, was protecting the little boat. They reached the dead waters without further accident. There danger ceased almost entirely.

The preceptor, finding his watch at the prow no longer necessary, took the oars from the weary hands of Frederick, who hastened to make the unfortunate sufferers drink a little wine.

Ten minutes after, the little boat landed upon the shore.

CHAPTER XXXI.

At their disembarking David and Frederick found Madame Bastien.

The young woman had assisted at a few of the episodes of this courageous salvage, by the aid of David's field-glass, leaving the scene, and taking another view by turns, as the danger seemed imminent or surmounted.

Sometimes Marie found her strength unequal to the sight of the heroic struggle of her son, whom she could not encourage by word or gesture.

Again, she would yield to the irresistible desire to know if Frederick had escaped the dangers which threatened him every moment.

During this period of admiration, tears, transports, hope, and agonies of terror, Marie had more than one opportunity of judging of David's brave solicitude for Frederick, and it would be hardly possible to describe the joy of the young mother when she saw the little boat land, and welcomed not only David and her son, but the unfortunate sufferers whom they had so courageously rescued.

But Marie's happiness became a sort of religious meditation when she learned from David that Raoul de Pont Brillant owed his life to Frederick.

Thus had the unhappy child providentially expiated the crime of his attempted homicide.

Thus disappeared from his life the only stain which his restoration had not been able utterly to efface.

The farmer and his family, loaded with favours and

the sympathetic care of Madame Bastien, were installed at the farm, for the miserable beings had nothing left in the world.

Nor did that day or that night see the end of Madame Bastien's provident care.

The highways, cut off by this sudden inundation against which it was impossible to provide, rendered the means of salvage very scarce, and within the radius of country called the Valley, the little boat belonging to Frederick was the sole resource.

The lowland, almost entirely submerged, contained a great number of isolated farmhouses; some were completely destroyed and their inmates drowned, other houses resisted the impetuosity of the waters, but were so near as to be invaded by the rising of the overflow, and Frederick and David in the afternoon of the same day and in the next day accomplished the salvage of many families, and carried clothing and provisions to other victims of the disaster who had taken refuge in their garrets while the waters held possession of the lower story.

In these numerous expeditions Frederick and David displayed indefatigable perseverance, which was the means of rescue for many, and won the admiration of those people whom the advancing waters had driven back on the upland, where the farm of Madame Bastien was situated.

David's instructions did indeed bear good fruit.

The valour and generosity of Frederick were excited to almost incredible deeds by his envy of the more exalted position of the Marquis de Pont Brillant.

"I am only a half peasant; I am not rich and am not a marquis; I have no bark painted crimson and no oarsmen in livery, nor ancestors to look back to. I have only the encouragement of my mother, the support of my friend, my two arms, and my energy," said the young man to himself, "but by means of my devotion to the

victims of this scourge, my obscure and plebeian name may become one day as well known in this country as the illustrious name of Pont Brillant. All my regret is that the wound of the marquis keeps him at the castle. I would have so much liked to rival him in zeal and courage before the face of everybody!"

In fact the wound which Raoul de Pont Brillant had received was serious enough to confine him to the bed, to his own great regret, for at the first news of the inundation he had valiantly jumped into his yawl and ordered it to the spot where it would prove the most useful.

But when the marquis became incapable of taking command aud directing and inspiring his people his own inaction extended to the rest of the house, and the dowager of Pont Brillant, interested only in the suffering of her grandson, gave herself no further concern about the disaster, and roundly rebuked the cockswain of the bark for not having opposed the foolish temerity of Raoul.

Madame Bastien understood the duties of a mother otherwise. With a firm eye she saw her son go to brave new perils; she sought distraction from her own fears only in the care and comfort which she administered with adorable zeal to those whom Providence threw in her way.

Thus did she spend her long days of anxious concern for her son.

The day after the overflow, when it had somewhat abated, the roads were renderd practicable, and a few bridges repaired by carpenters permitted the organisation of more efficient means of aid to the sufferers.

As the waters retired, the unfortunate people whom the deluge had driven away from their homes returned broken in heart, and hastening in bitter impatience to see the extent of their disasters.

So it happened that the evening of the third day the farm of Madame Bastien, which had served as a place of refuge for all, became as solitary as in the past, the

family of Jean François being the only ones left in the house, because they had no other shelter.

When the route of Pont Brillant became free again Doctor Dufour, whose anxiety had been extreme, hastened to the farm, to learn with joy and surprise that, notwithstanding the fatigues and excitements of these two terrible days, not one of the three friends had need of his attention. He learned also from Marie of Frederick's wonderful cure, and after two hours of delightful confidences he left the happy home, whose inmates were about to take that repose so nobly bought.

Raoul de Pont Brillant soon learned that the young man who had snatched him from an almost certain death was Frederick Bastien.

The dowager had not renounced her project of giving this charming little commoner, so near her castle, and whose husband was always absent, to her grandson as a mistress; so, finding, as she said to Zerbinette, an excellent opportunity for undertaking the affair, she went again to see Madame Bastien, at whose house she had twice before presented herself in vain, taking her maid with her in her elegant carriage.

This time it was not necessary for Marguerite to lie in order to declare to the dowager that Madame Bastien was not at home. In fact, for several days the young woman was continually absent from her home, occupied in lavishing on all sides her blessings of material comfort and spiritual consolation.

The marquise, provoked at the futility of this visit, said to her faithful Zerbinette, as she entered:

"This is bad luck; by my faith one would say this little fool is trying not to meet me. These obstacles make me impatient, and I must finish my undertaking without considering Raoul, whether he knows how to go about it. It is an excellent beginning to be fished up by this blockhead. Indeed, in the name of gratitude to her son, Raoul has the right not to stir from his mother's

house until he has everything in hand. It is a famous opportunity. I must give this dear boy a lesson."

It was the 31st of December, fifteen days after the overflow. The damage had been incalculable, especially for a multitude of unfortunate sufferers, who, returning to their ruined hovels, covered with mud and slime, found only the walls, saturated with water and barely protected by a broken roof.

The ruin was general.

One had lost all his little store of grain gathered from the gleaning, or bought by great privation for the winter's nourishment.

Another had seen the waters carry away his pig or his cow, treasures of the proletary of the fields; again, there were those who had lost the only bed upon which the family slept; in fact, almost all had to deplore the sand-banks strewn over the little field from which they lived and paid the rent of the farm.

Besides, the vines were torn up by the roots, and the wine, carefully preserved to pay the hire, was carried off with the casks that contained it; in short, all those labourers, who, from the rising to the setting sun, worked with the indefatigable energy of necessity, and could hardly make both ends meet, felt bitterly that this scourge of forty-eight hours would last for many years upon their lives, and render their existence still more miserable.

The Marquis of Pont Brillant and his grandmother acted more than royally; they sent twenty thousand francs to the mayor, and twenty thousand to the parson, the day after the inundation.

Marie, as we have said, never possessed any other money than the small monthly allowance given to her by M. Bastien, for the maintenance of herself and her son; a sum from which she had little to spare for alms. She wrote then immediately to her husband, who

was detained by business in Berri, and besought him to send her at once two or three thousand francs, that she might come to the assistance of the sufferers.

M. Bastien replied by asking his wife if she was making a jest of him, because he had, as he said, ten acres of the best land in the valley ruined by the sand; so far from coming to the assistance of others, he hoped to be included among those sufferers who would be the most largely indemnified, and as soon as his business was ended he was coming to the farm to draw up a statement of his losses so as to estimate the amount of his claim upon the government.

Madame Bastien, more distressed than surprised at her husband's reply, had recourse to other expedients.

She possessed a few jewels, inherited from her mother; there were at the farm about fifteen plates and a few other pieces of silver; the young woman sent Marguerite to sell this silver and jewels at Pont Brillant; the whole brought about two thousand francs; David asked Marie's permission to double the amount, and this money, employed with rare intelligence, proved the salvation of a large number of families.

Going through the country with her son, while David was busy making purchases, Marie saw for herself and doubled the value of her benefits by her kind words, a sack of grain for some, a few pieces of furniture for others, and for others still, linen and clothing. All was distributed by the young woman with as much discretion as discernment, and all was suitable to the needs of each.

Jacques Bastien owned a large and beautiful forest of fir-trees. The young woman, although she expected nothing less than the fury of her husband at the dreadful outrage, resolved to diminish by one thousand the number of these splendid firs, and many houses without roofs were at least solidly covered for the winter with beams and rafters of this rustic material, on which was

extended a thick layer of wild broom, woven together with long and supple twigs of willow.

It was David, who had seen in his travels through the Alps shelters thus constructed so as to resist the winds and snows of the mountains, who gave the peasants these ideas for the construction of roofs; directing and sharing their work, he was able to apply and utilise a number of facts acquired in his extensive peregrinations.

As the overflow had swept away many mills and the greater part of the ovens belonging to the isolated houses, — these ovens being built outside and projecting from the gable end, — the peasants were compelled to buy bread in the town, at some distance from the houses scattered through the valley. They bought it dearly, since almost a whole day was required to go and return, and time was precious after such a disaster. David had seen the Egyptian nomads crushing corn, after they had moistened it, between two stones, and preparing cakes of it, which they cooked in the hot ashes. He taught this process to the families whose ovens had been destroyed, and they had at least, during the first days, sufficient and comfortable food.

But, in everything, David was admirably seconded by Frederick, and took pains to efface himself so as to attract gratitude toward his pupil, that he might be more and more encouraged in the noble way in which he was walking.

And besides, even when David had neglected this delicate solicitude for his pupil, Frederick displayed such courage, such perseverance, and showed himself so affectionate and so compassionate toward those whose sufferings he and his mother were relieving by every means in their power, that his name was in every mouth and his memory in every heart.

During the fortnight which followed the overflow, every day was employed by Madame Bastien, her son, and David in benevolent work.

When night came they returned home much fatigued, sometimes wet and covered with snow, and each made a toilet whose cleanliness was its only luxury.

Marie Bastien then would return to the library, her magnificent hair beautifully arranged, and according to her custom almost always dressed in a gown of coarse, shaded blue cloth, marvellously fitting her nymph-like figure. The dazzling whiteness of two broad cuffs, and a collar fastened by a little cravat of cherry or orange coloured silk, relieved the dark shade of this gown, which sometimes permitted one to see a beautiful foot, always freshly clad in Scotch thread stockings, white as snow, over which were crossed the silk buskins of a little shoe made of reddish brown leather.

This active life passed continually in the open air, the cheerfulness of spirit, the gaiety of heart, the habitual expression of charitable sentiments, the serenity of soul, had not only effaced from the lovely features of Marie Bastien the last trace of past suffering, but, like certain flowers, which, after having languished somewhat, often revive to greater freshness, the beauty of Marie became dazzling, and David frequently forgot himself as he contemplated it in silent adoration.

The same causes produced the same results in Frederick; he was more charming than ever, in youth, vigour, and grace.

Marie, her son, and David were accustomed to assemble in the library after these long days of active and courageous devotion, in order to talk over the events of the morning while waiting for dinner, to which they cheerfully did honour, without reflecting that the modest silver had been replaced by a brilliant imitation. After the repast, they went to visit a workroom, where Marie joined several women who were employed to prepare linen and clothing. This economy enabled her to double her gifts. This last duty accomplished, they returned to spend the long winter evenings in the

library around a glowing fireside, while the bitter north wind whistled out of doors.

The days thus spent passed delightfully to these three persons united by sacred indissoluble ties.

Sometimes they discussed plans for Frederick's future, for after these fifteen days of arduous labour, he was about to begin new studies under David's direction.

The preceptor had travelled over two hemispheres, and often spoke of his voyages, and replied to the untiring questioning of his associates, with interesting accounts of cities, armies, and costumes which he sometimes portrayed with an accurate pencil.

An appropriate reading or the execution of some piece of music terminated the evening, for David was an excellent musician, and frequently entertained his hearers with the national airs of different countries, and romances charming in their freshness and simplicity.

In these familiar conversations, mingled with intimate confidences, David learned to appreciate more and more the exquisite character and loftiness of Madame Bastien's soul. Freed from all preoccupation, she had regained her liberty of mind, while the preceptor observed with renewed pleasure the influence he had exercised over Frederick's ideas, and prepared new plans of study which he cheerfully submitted to the mother and son.

Indeed, every day increased David's affection for his pupil, and he bestowed upon him all the treasure of tenderness which had filled his heart since the lamented death of his young brother. In thus loving passionately the son of Madame Bastien, David deceived himself by these fraternal memories, just as one is often deceived by vain regrets in falling in love with a resemblance.

Not infrequently midnight sounded, and the happy trio looked at each other in surprise, deploring the rapid flight of time, as they exclaimed:

"Already!"

And they would always say to each other in parting:

"To-morrow!"

Marie would retire to her own room, but Frederick would conduct David to his chamber, and there, how many times, standing within the embrasure of the door, the preceptor and pupil forgot themselves in the charm of a long friendly chat; one listening with faith, responding with eagerness, questioning with the ardour of his age, the other speaking with the tender solicitude of the mature man, who smiles compassionately on youth, impatient to try the mysterious path of destiny.

How many times old Marguerite was obliged to ascend to the floor upon which David's chamber was situated, and say to Frederick:

"Indeed, monsieur, it is midnight, it is one o'clock in the morning, and you know very well that madame never goes to bed before you do."

And Frederick would press David's hand and descend to his mother's chamber.

There, David would still be the subject of long conversations between the young woman and her son.

"Mother," Frederick would say, "how interesting was his account of his travels in Asia Minor."

"Oh, yes, nothing could be more so," Marie would answer. "And besides, Frederick, what curious things M. David has taught us about the vibrations of sound, and all that, too, by a few chords on this broken old piano."

"Mother, what a charming account he gave us, in comparing the properties of sound and light."

"And that delightful strain from Mozart that he played. Do you remember the choir of spirits in the 'Enchanted Flute?' It was so aerial, so light. What a pleasure for poor savages like us, who have never known anything of Mozart; it is like discovering a treasure of harmony."

"And how touching his anecdote about the old age of Haydn. And what he told us of the association of

the Moravian brethren in America. How much less misery, how much benefit to poor people if those ideas could be applied in our country!"

"And, mother, did you notice that his eyes filled with tears when he spoke of the happiness which might be the portion of so many people who are now in want?"

"Ah, my poor child, his is the noblest heart in the world."

"Yes, mother, and how we ought to cherish it! Oh, we must love him so much, you see; yes, so very much that it will be impossible for him to leave us. He has no family; his best friend, Doctor Dufour, is our neighbour. Where could M. David find a better home than with us?"

"Leave us!" exclaimed Marie, "leave us! why, it is he who gives us our strength, our faith, our confidence in the future. Is it possible he can abandon us now?"

Then old Marguerite was obliged to interpose again.

"For the love of God, madame, do go to bed; why, it is two o'clock in the morning," said the old servant. "You rose at six o'clock, and so did M. Frederick, and then so must work all day long! Besides, it is not good sense to sit up so late!"

"Marguerite is right to scold us, my child," said Marie, smiling, and kissing her son on the forehead, "we are foolish to go to bed so late."

And the next day, again Marguerite's recriminations cut short the conversations of the mother and son.

Two or three times Marie went to bed in a sweetly pensive mood.

One evening, while Frederick was reading, his friend, thoughtful and sedate, his elbows on the table, was leaning over with his forehead on his hand; the light of the lamp, concentrated by the shade, shone brightly upon the noble and expressive face of David.

Marie, a moment distracted from the reading, directed

her gaze to the guardian of her son, and looked at him a long time. By degrees, the young woman felt her eyes grow moist, her beautiful bosom palpitate suddenly, while a delicate blush mounted her snowy brow.

Just at this moment, David accidentally raised his eyes and met Marie's glance.

The young woman immediately cast her eyes down, and blushed scarlet.

Another time David was at the piano, accompanying Frederick and Marie, who were singing a duet; the young woman turned the page, just as David had the same intuition, and their hands met.

At this electric contact, she trembled, her blood rushed toward her heart, and a cloud passed before her eyes.

Notwithstanding these suggestive indications, the young mother slept that evening, pensive and dreamy, but full of calm and chaste serenity.

As always before, she kissed her son on the forehead, without blushing.

Thus passed the last fortnight of December.

Upon the eve of the new year, David, Marie, and her son were preparing to go out, in order to carry a few last remembrances to their dependents, when Marguerite handed her mistress a letter which the express had just brought.

At the sight of the handwriting, Marie could not hide her surprise and fear.

This letter was from M. Bastien, who wrote as follows:

"MADAME, MY WIFE (with whom I am not at all satisfied): — My business in Berri has ended sooner than I anticipated. I am now at Pont Brillant, with my boon companion, Bridou, occupied in verifying accounts. We will leave soon for the farm, where Bridou will stay

a few days with me, in order to assist me in estimating the indemnity due me, out of the sum allotted to the sufferers from the overflow, because we must get some good out of so much evil.

"We will arrive in time for dinner.

"Take care to have a leg of mutton with an abundance of clove of garlic in the best style, and some fine cabbage soup, as I am fond of it, with plenty of hot salted pork, and plenty of Blois sausage; attend especially to that, if you please.

"*Nota bene.* I shall arrive in a very bad humour, and very much disposed to box my son's ears, in case his fits of melancholy and coxcomb airs are not at an end.

"Your husband, who has no desire to laugh,

"JACQUES BASTIEN.

"P. S. Bridou is like me; he likes cheese that can walk alone. Tell Marguerite to provide it, and do you attend to it."

Madame Bastien had not recovered from the surprise and regret produced by the unexpected announcement of M. Bastien's return, when she was drawn from her unhappy reflections by a tumultuous and constantly increasing excitement that she heard outside. One would have declared that an assemblage had surrounded the house. Suddenly Marguerite entered, running, her eyes sparkling with joy, as she cried:

"Ah, madame! come, — come and see!"

Marie, more and more astonished, automatically followed the servant.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE weather was clear, the winter sun radiant. Marie Bastien, as she went out on the rustic porch, built above the front door of the house, saw about one hundred persons, men, women, and children, almost all clothed in coarse, but new and warm garments, filing in order, and ranging themselves behind the little garden.

This procession was ended by a cart ornamented with branches of fir, on which was placed what was called by the country people, a ferry-boat — a little flat boat, resembling the one Frederick and David so bravely used during the overflow.

Behind the cart, which stopped at the garden gate, came an empty open carriage, drawn by four horses, and mounted by two postilions in the livery of Pont Brillant; two footmen were seated behind.

At the head of the procession marched Jean François, the farmer, leading two of his little children by the hand; his wife held the smallest child in her arms.

At the sight of Madame Bastien, the farmer approached.

"Good day, Jean François," said the young woman to him, affectionately. "What do these good people who accompany you want?"

"We wish to speak to M. Frederick, madame."

Marie turned to Marguerite, who, with a triumphant air, was standing behind her mistress, and said to her:

"Run and tell my son, Marguerite."

"It will not take long, madame; he is in the library with M. David."

While the servant went in quest of Frederick, Marie, who saw then for the first time the handsomely equipped carriage standing before the garden gate, wondered what could be its purpose.

Frederick hastened, not expecting the spectacle which awaited him.

"What do you want, mother?" said he, quickly.

Then, seeing the crowd which had gathered in the little garden, he stopped suddenly, with an interrogative look at his mother.

"My child —"

But the young woman, whose heart was beating with joy, could say no more; overcome by emotion, she had just discovered that the assemblage was composed entirely of those unfortunate people whom she and her son and David had helped in the time of the overflow.

Then Marie said:

"My child, it is Jean François who wishes to speak to you, — there he is!"

And the happy mother withdrew behind her son, exchanging a glance of inexpressible delight with David, who had followed his pupil, and stood half hidden under the porch.

Frederick, whose astonishment continued to increase, made a step toward Jean François, who said to the young man, in a voice full of tears:

"M. Frederick, it is we poor valley people, who have come to thank you with a free heart, as well as your mother and your friend, M. David, who have been so kind. As I owe you the most," continued the farmer, with a voice more and more broken by tears, and pointing to his wife and children with an expressive gesture, "as I owe you the most, M. Frederick, the others have told me — and — I —"

The poor man could say no more. Sobs stifled his voice.

Other sobs of tenderness from the excited crowd

responded to the tears of Jean François, and broke the almost religious silence which reigned for several minutes.

Frederick's heart was melted to tears of joy. He threw himself upon his mother's neck, as if he wished to turn toward her these testimonials of gratitude by which he was so profoundly touched.

At a sign from Jean François, who had dried his eyes and tried to regain his self-possession, several men of the assemblage approached the cart, and, taking the ferry-boat, brought it in their arms and laid it before Frederick.

It was a simple and rustic little boat with two oars of unpolished wood, and on the inner railing were written in rude and uneven letters, cut into the framework, the words: "The poor people of the valley to M. Frederick Bastien."

Then followed the date of the overflow.

Jean François, having subdued his emotion, said, as he showed the boat to the son of Madame Bastien:

"M. Frederick, we united with each other in making this little boat, which almost looks like the one which served you in saving us and our effects. Excuse the liberty, M. Frederick, but it is with good intention and warm friendship that we bring this little boat to you. When you use it, you will think of the poor people of the valley, and upon those who will always love you, M. Frederick; they will teach your name to their little children, who, when they are grown, will some day teach it to theirs, because that name, you see, M. Frederick, is now the name of the good saint of the country."

Frederick allowed his tears to flow, as a silent and eloquent response. David then, leaning over his pupil's ear, whispered to him:

"My child, is not this rude procession worth all the splendour of the brilliant hunting procession of St. Hubert?"

At the moment Frederick turned toward David to press his hand, he saw a movement in the crowd, which, suddenly separating itself with a murmur of surprise and curiosity, gave passage to Raoul de Pont Brillant.

The marquis advanced a little in front of Jean François; then, with perfect ease and grace, he said to Frederick:

"I have come, monsieur, to thank you for saving my life, because this is my first day out, and it was my duty to dedicate it to you. I met these good people on the way, and after learning from one of them the purpose of their assemblage I joined them, since, like these good people, I am of the valley, and like several of them, I owe my life to you."

After these words, uttered with an accent perhaps more polished than emotional, the Marquis de Pont Brillant, with exquisite tact, again mingled with the multitude.

"Ah, well, my child," whispered David to Frederick, "is it not the Marquis de Pont Brillant now who ought to envy you?"

Frederick pressed David's hand, but was possessed by the thought: "He whom I basely desired to murder is there, ignorant of my dastardly attempt, and he has come to thank me for saving his life."

Then the son of Madame Bastien, addressing the people of the valley, said to them, in an impassioned voice, as he mingled with them, and cordially pressed their hands:

"My friends, what I have done was done at the suggestion of my mother, and with the aid of my friend, M. David. It is, then, in their name, as well as my own, that I thank you from the bottom of my heart for these evidences of affection. As to this little boat," added the young man, turning toward the boat which had been deposited in the middle of the garden, and contemplating it with as much sadness as joy, "it shall be consecrated

to the pleasure of my mother, and this touching inscription will remind us of the inhabitants of the valley, whom we love as much as they love us."

Then Frederick, addressing in turn all those who surrounded him, asked one if his fields were in a tillable condition, another if he hoped to preserve a great part of his vineyard, another still if the slime deposited on his land by the Loire had not somewhat compensated for the disaster from which he had suffered. To all Frederick said some word which proved that he had their interest and their misfortunes at heart.

Marie, on her part, speaking to the women and mothers and children, found a word of affection and solicitude for all, and proved that like her son she had a perfect acquaintance with the sorrows and needs of each one.

Frederick hoped to join the Marquis de Pont Brillant; he earnestly longed to press the hand of the man whom he had so long pursued with bitter hatred; it seemed to him that this frank expression ought to efface from his mind the last memory of the dreadful deed he had contemplated; but he could not find the marquis, whose carriage had also disappeared.

After the departure of the valley people, Frederick, entering the house with his mother and David, found Marguerite, who proudly handed him a letter.

"What is this letter, Marguerite?" asked the young man.

"Read, M. Frederick."

"You permit me, mother? and you also, my friend?"

Marie and David made a sign in the affirmative.

Frederick immediately cast his eyes upon the signature and said:

"It is from the Marquis de Pont Brillant."

"The very same, M. Frederick," interposed Marguerite. "Before departing in his carriage he came through the grove and asked to write you a word."

"Come in the library, my child," said Marie to her son.

David, Frederick, and his mother being alone, the young man said, innocently:

"I am going to read it aloud, mother."

"As you please, my child."

"Ah, but now I think it is doubtless a letter of thanks," said Frederick, smiling, "and should not be read aloud."

"You are right; you would suppress three-fourths of it," said Marie, smiling in her turn. "Give the letter to M. David, he will read it better than you."

"Come," answered Frederick, gaily, "my modesty serves me ill. If it is praise, it will still seem very sweet to me."

"That will be a punishment for your humility," said David, laughing, and he read what follows:

"'As I had the honour of telling you, monsieur, I left my house in the hope of expressing my gratitude to you. I met the valley people, who were on their way to make an ovation for you,—you, monsieur, whose name has rightfully become so popular in our country since the inundation. I thought I ought to join these people and wait the opportunity to thank you personally.

"'I should have accomplished this duty to-day, monsieur, without this interesting circumstance.

"'As I heard you thank the good people of the valley in a voice so full of emotion, it seemed to me I recognised the voice of a person whom I met at night in the depth of the forest of Pont Brillant about two months ago, for, if I remember correctly, this meeting took place in the first week of November.'"

"Frederick, what does that mean?" asked Madame Bastien, interrupting David.

"Presently, mother, I will tell you all. Please go on, my friend."

David continued:

"'It is possible, monsieur, and I earnestly hope it, that this passage in my letter relating to this meeting may appear incomprehensible to you; in that case please attach no importance to it, and attribute it to a mistake caused by a resemblance of voice and accent which is very unusual.

"'If, on the contrary, monsieur, you comprehend me; if you are, in a word, the person whom I met at night in a very dark spot where it was impossible to distinguish your features, you will condescend, no doubt, monsieur, to explain to me the contradiction (apparent, I hope) which exists between your conduct at the time of our meeting in the forest and at the time of the inundation.

"'I await, then, monsieur, with your permission, the elucidation of this mystery, that I may know with what sentiments I can henceforth have the honour of subscribing myself. Your very humble and obedient servant,

"'R., MARQUIS DE PONT BRILLANT.'"

The reading of this letter, written with assurance and aggressive pride, was scarcely ended when the son of Madame Bastien ran to a table and wrote a few lines spontaneously, folded the paper, and returned to his mother.

"I am going, mother," said he, "to relate to you in a few words the adventure in the forest; afterward you and my friend will judge if my reply to the Marquis de Pont Brillant is proper."

And Frederick, without mentioning the conversation between the dowager and Zerbinette which he had surprised (for that would have outraged his mother), told the young woman and David all that happened on the fatal day to which the marquis alluded; how the marquis, having refused to fight in the darkness with an unknown person, and wishing to escape from the persistence of Frederick, had overthrown him with the breast of his

horse; how Frederick, in a delirium of rage, had lain in ambuscade near a spot where the marquis would pass, in order to kill him.

This recital terminated, without justifying Frederick, but at least explaining to his mother and David by what sequence of sentiments and deeds he had been led to conceive the idea of a dastardly ambush unknown to the Marquis of Pont Brillant, Frederick said to his mother:

"Now, here is my answer to the letter of the Marquis de Pont Brillant."

Marie Bastien read the following:

"MONSIEUR: — I provoked you without cause; I am ashamed of it. I saved your life; I am glad of it. There is the whole mystery.

"Your very humble servant,
"FREDERICK BASTIEN."

"Well, my child," said David, earnestly, "you nobly confess a wicked intention that you have paid for at the peril of your life."

"When I think of this rehabilitation and of all that has just occurred," said Marie, with profound emotion, "when I realise that it is all your work, M. David, and that fifteen days ago my son was killing himself — his heart consumed with hatred — "

"And yet you do not know all, mother," interrupted Frederick, "no, you do not know all that I owe to this good genius who has come to change our grief to joy."

"What do you mean, my child?"

"Frederick!" added David, with a tone of reproach, suspecting the intention of Madame Bastien's son.

"My friend, to-day is the day of confessions, and, besides, I see my mother so happy that —"

Then, interrupting himself, he asked:

"You are happy, are you not, mother?"

Marie replied by embracing her son with ecstasy.

"So you see, my friend, my mother is so happy that a danger past cannot give her cause for sorrow, especially when she will have one reason more for loving you and blessing you."

"Frederick, once again I beseech you —"

"My friend, the only reason which has made me conceal this secret from my mother was the fear of distressing her."

"I beg you, dear child, explain yourself," cried Marie.

"Ah, well, mother, those farewells at night, you remember? — it was not a dream."

"Why, did you really come to me that dreadful night?"

"Yes, to bid you farewell."

"My God! and where were you going?"

"I was going to kill myself."

Marie uttered a shriek of fright, and turned pale.

"Frederick," said David, "you see what imprudence —"

"No, no, M. David," interrupted the young woman, trying to smile. "It is I who am absurdly weak. Have I not my son here in my arms, on my heart?"

As she said these words, Marie pressed her son in her arms, as they sat together on the sofa; then kissing him on the forehead, she added, in a tremblng voice:

"Oh, I have you in my arms. Now I have no more fear, I can hear all."

"Well, mother, devoured by envy, and more than that, pursued by remorse, which always awakened at the sound of your voice, I wanted to kill myself. I went out with M. David, I escaped from him. He succeeded in finding my tracks. I had run to the Loire, and when he arrived —"

"Ah! unhappy child!" cried Marie, "but for him you would have drowned!"

"Yes, and when I was about to drown I called you,

mother, as one calls for help. He heard my cries, and threw himself in the Loire, and — "

Frederick was interrupted by Marguerite.

The old servant this time did not present herself smiling and triumphant, but timid and alarmed, as she whispered to her mistress, as if she were announcing some fatal news:

" Madame, madame, monsieur has come ! "

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THESE words of Marguerite, "Monsieur has come!" announcing the arrival of Jacques Bastien at the very moment in which Marie realised that she owed to David not only the moral restoration but the life of her son, so appalled the young woman that she sat mute and motionless, as if struck by an unexpected blow; for the incidents of the morning had banished from her mind every thought of her husband's letter. Frederick, on his part, felt a sad surprise. Thanks to his mother's reticence he was ignorant of much of his father's unkindness and injustice, but certain domestic scenes in which the natural brutality of Jacques Bastien's character had been manifested, and the unwise severity with which he exercised his paternal authority in his rare visits to the farm, united in rendering the relations of father and son very strained.

David also saw the arrival of M. Bastien wiht profound apprehension; although prepared to make all possible concessions to this man, even to the point of utter self-effacement, it pained him to think that the continuity of his relations with Frederick and his mother depended absolutely on the caprice of Jacques Bastien.

Marguerite was so little in advance of her master that David, Marie, and her son were still under the effects of their astonishment and painful reflections, when Jacques Bastien entered the library, accompanied by his companion, Bridou, the bailiff of Pont Brillant.

Jacques Bastien, as we have said, was an obese Hercules; his large head, covered with a forest of reddish

blond curls, was joined close to his broad shoulders by the neck of a bull; his face was large, florid, and almost beardless, as is frequently the case in athletic physiques; his nose big, his lips of the kind called blubber, and his eye at the same time shrewd, wicked, and deceitful. The blue blouse, which, according to his custom, he wore over his riding-coat, distinctly delineated the prominence of his Falstaff-like stomach; he wore a little cap of fox hair, with ear-protectors, trousers of cheap velvet, and iron-tipped boots that had not been cleaned for several days; in one of his short, yet enormous hands, broader than they were long, he carried a stick of holly-wood, fastened to his wrist by a greasy leather string; and if the truth must be told, this man, a sort of mastodon, at ten paces distant, smelled like a goat.

His boon companion, Bridou, also clad in a blouse over his old black coat, and wearing a round hat, was a small man, with spectacles, lank, covered with freckles, with a cunning, sly expression, pinched mouth, and high cheek-bones: one might have taken him for a ferret wearing eyeglasses.

At the sight of Jacques Bastien, David shuddered with pain and apprehension, as he thought that Marie's life was for ever linked to the life of this man, who even lacked the generosity of remaining absent from the unhappy woman.

Jacques Bastien and Bridou entered the library without salutation; the first words that the master of the domicile, with an angry frown and rude voice, addressed to his wife, who rose to receive him, were these:

"Who gave the order to fell my fir-trees?"

"What fir-trees, monsieur?" asked Marie, without knowing what she said, so much was she upset by her husband's arrival.

"How, what fir-trees?" replied Jacques Bastien. "What but my fir-trees on the road? Do I speak enigmas? In passing along the road I have just seen

that more than a thousand of the finest trees on the border of the plantation have been cut down! I ask you who has allowed them to be sold without my order?"

"They have not been sold, monsieur," replied Marie, regaining her self-possession.

"If they have not been sold, why were they cut down? Who ordered them cut down?"

"I did, monsieur."

"You?"

And Jacques Bastien, overwhelmed with astonishment, was silent a moment; then he said:

"Ah! so it was you, madame! A new performance, forsooth! You are drawing it rather strong. What do you say about it, Bridou?"

"Bless me, Jacques, you had better look into it."

"That is just what I am going to do; and what use did you have for the money, madame, that you had more than a thousand of my finest firs cut down, if you please?"

"Monsieur, it would be better, I think, to talk of business when we are alone. You must see that my son's preceptor, M. David, is present."

And Madame Bastien indicated by her glance David, who was sitting apart from the company.

Jacques Bastien turned around abruptly, and after having contemptuously measured David from head to foot, said to him, rudely:

"Monsieur, I wish to speak with my wife."

David bowed and went out, and Frederick followed him, outraged at the treatment received by his friend.

"Come, madame," continued Jacques Bastien, "you see your Latin spitter has departed; are you going to answer me at last?"

"When we are alone, monsieur."

"If it is I who restrain you," said Bridou, walking toward the door, "I am going to march out."

"Come now, Bridou, do you make a jest of everybody? Please stay where you are," cried Jacques.

Then, turning to Marie, he said:

"My companion knows my business as well as I do; now, madame, we are talking of business, for a thousand firs on the edge of my farm is a matter of business, and a big one, too; so Bridou will remain."

"As you please, monsieur; then I will tell you before M. Bridou that I thought it my duty to have your fir-trees cut down, in order to give them to the unfortunate valley people, that they might rebuild their dwellings half destroyed by the overflow."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FROM Jacques Bastien's point of view, the thing was so outrageous that it was incomprehensible to him, as he artlessly said to the bailiff, "Bridou, do you understand it?"

"Why, bless me, yes," replied Bridou, with an air of assumed good nature, "madame, your wife, has made a present of your fir-trees to the sufferers from the overflow; that is true, is it not, madame?"

"Yes, monsieur."

Bastien, almost choked with anger and astonishment, at first could do nothing but stammer as he looked furiously at his wife:

"You — have — dared — what! You —"

Then stamping his foot with rage, he made a step toward his wife, shaking his great fists with such a threatening air, that the bailiff jumped before him, and cried: "Come, Jacques, what in the devil are you doing? You will not die of it, old fellow; it is only a present of about two thousand francs that your wife has given to the sufferers."

"And you think I shall let it go like that?" replied Jacques, trying to restrain himself. "You must be a fool if you thought you could hide it. This destruction of my firs was plain enough before my eyes as I passed. You forgot that, eh?"

"If you had been here, monsieur," answered Marie, softly, for fear of irritating Bastien still more, "like me, you would have been a witness of this terrible disaster

and the evils it caused, and you would have done the same, I do not doubt."

"I, by thunder, when I myself have a part of my land ruined with sand."

"But, monsieur, there is enough land and wood left you, while these poor people whom we helped were without bread and shelter.

"Ah, indeed; then it is my business to give bread and shelter to those who have not got it!" cried Bastien, exasperated; "upon my word of honour, it is making a tool of me. Do you hear her, Bridou?"

"You know very well, old fellow, that ladies understand nothing about business, and they had better not meddle with it at all, ha, ha, ha! especially in cutting wood," replied the bailiff with a mellifluous giggle.

"But did I tell her to meddle with it?" replied Jacques Bastien, whose fury continued to rise; "could I suppose she would ever have the audacity to — But no, no, there is something else at the bottom of it, she must have her head turned. Ah, by thunder! I came just in time. By this sample, it appears that wonderful things have been going on here in my absence. Come, come, I shall have trouble enough; fortunately I am equal to it, and I have a solid fist."

Marie, looking up at Jacques with an expression of supplicating sweetness, said to him:

"I cannot regret what I have done, monsieur, only I do regret that an act which seems to me to merit your approval, should cause you such keen disappointment and annoyance. Besides," added the young woman, trying to smile, "I am certain that you will forget this trouble when you learn how courageously Frederick has behaved at the time of the overflow. At the risk of his life, he saved Jean François and his wife and children from certain death. Two other families of the valley were also —"

"Eh, by God's thunder! it is precisely because he

paid with his own person that you did not need to make yourself so generous at my expense, and pay out of my purse," cried the booby, interrupting his wife.

"How," replied Marie, confounded by this reproach, "did you know that Frederick — "

"Had gone, like so many others, to the aid of the inundated families? Zounds! I was bored with that talk in Pont Brillant. That is a fine affair indeed. Who forced him to do it? If he did it, it was because it suited him to do it. Oh, well, so much the better for him. Besides, the newspapers are full of such tricks. And yet, if the name of my son had at least been put in the journal betimes, that would have pleased me."

"Perhaps he would have had the cross of honour," added the bailiff, with a bantering, sarcastic air.

"Besides, we must have a talk about my son, and a serious one," continued Jacques Bastien. "My companion, Bridou, will also have a say in that."

"I do not understand you," answered Marie, stammering. "What relation can M. Bridou possibly have with Frederick?"

"You will know, because we will have a talk tomorrow, and with you, and about a good deal. Do not think you understand that this affair of my thousand fir-trees will pass like a letter by the post. But it is six o'clock, let us have dinner."

And he rang.

At these words, Marie remembered the silver plate carried to the city and sold in the absence and without the knowledge of her husband. Had she been alone with Jacques, she would have endured his threats and injuries and anger, but when she thought of the transports of rage he would yield to before her son and David, she was frightened at the possible consequences of such a scene, and with reason.

Jacques Bastien went on talking:

"Have you had a good fire made in Bridou's cham-

ber? I wrote to you that he would spend several days here."

"I thought you would share your chamber with M. Bridou," replied Madame Bastien. "Unless you do, I do not see how I can lodge the gentleman."

"What! there is a chamber up-stairs."

"But that is occupied by my son's preceptor."

"You are very fine, you are, with your preceptor. Ah, well, 'tis easy to take him by the shoulders and put him out, your Latin spitter, and there's the room."

"I should be distressed to put him out," said the bailiff. "I would prefer to go back."

"Come, come, Bridou, evidently we are going to quarrel," replied Jacques.

Then, turning to his wife, he said, angrily:

"What! I warned you this morning that Bridou would spend several days here, and nothing is prepared?"

"But, monsieur, I ask again, where do you wish me to put the preceptor of my son if M. Bridou occupies his chamber?"

"The preceptor of my son," repeated Jacques, puffing up his cheeks and shrugging his shoulders; "you have only that in your mouth, playing the duchess. Ah well! the preceptor of your son can sleep with André, it won't kill him."

"But surely, monsieur," said Marie, "you do not think that—"

"Come now, do not provoke me, or I will go and tell your Latin spitter to march out of my house this instant, and see if I follow him on the road to Pont Brillant. It will amount in the end to my not being master of my own house, by God's thunder!"

Marie trembled. She knew M. Bastien capable of driving the preceptor brutally out of the house. She was silent a moment, then remembering the untiring devotion of David, she replied, trying to restrain her tears:

"Very well, monsieur, the preceptor will share André's chamber."

"Indeed," answered Jacques, with a sarcastic air, "that is very fortunate."

"And besides, you see, madame," added the bailiff with a conciliatory air, "a preceptor is little more than a servant, not anything more, because it is a person who takes wages, or I would not have him put out by the shoulders thus, as this great buffoon Jacques says."

Marguerite entered at this moment to announce dinner. Bridou took off his blouse, passed his hand through his yellow hair, and with a coquettish air offered his arm to Madame Bastien, who trembled in every limb.

Jacques Bastien threw his holly stick in a corner, kept on his blouse, and followed his wife and the bailiff to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XXXV.

When Madame Bastien, her husband, and the bailiff entered the dining-room, they found there David and Frederick.

The latter exchanged a glance with his preceptor, approached Jacques Bastien, and said to him, in a respectful tone:

"Good morning, father, I thought you wished to be alone with my mother, and that is why I withdrew upon your arrival."

"It seems that your hysterics are gone," said Bastien to his son, in a tone of sarcasm, "and you no longer need to travel for pleasure. That is a pity, for I wanted to humour you with pleasure."

"I do not know what you mean, father."

Instead of replying to his son, Bastien, still standing, occupied himself in counting the plates on the table; he saw five and said to his wife, curtly:

"Why are there five plates?"

"Why, monsieur, because we are five," replied Marie.

"How five? I, Bridou, you and your son, does that make five?"

"You forget M. David," said Marie.

Jacques then addressed the preceptor.

"Monsieur, I do not know upon what conditions my wife has engaged you. As for me, I am master here, and I do not like to have strangers at my table. That is my opinion."

At this new rudeness, the calmness of David did not

forsake him, the consciousness of insult brought an involuntary blush to his brow, but he bowed, without uttering a word, and started toward the door.

Frederick, his face flushed with indignation and distress at this second outrage against the character and dignity of David, was preparing to follow him, when a supplicating glance from his friend arrested him.

At this moment, Marie said to the preceptor:

"M. David, M. Bastien having disposed of your chamber for a few days, will you consent to having a bed prepared for you in the chamber with old André? — unfortunately we have no other place for you."

"Nothing easier, madame," replied David, smiling. "I have the honour of being somewhat at home; so it is for me to yield the chamber I occupy to a stranger."

David bowed again and left the dining-room.

After the departure of the preceptor, Jacques Bastien, entirely unconscious of his coarseness, sat down to the table, for he was very hungry in spite of the anger he nursed against his wife and son.

Each one took his place.

Jacques Bastien had Bridou on his right, Frederick on his left, and Marie sat opposite.

The anxiety of the young woman made her seek to change the subject of conversation constantly; she feared Jacques might discover the absence of the silver plate.

This revelation, however, hung upon a new incident.

Jacques Bastien, removing the cover from the soup tureen, dilated his wide nostrils, so as to inhale the aroma of the cabbage soup he had ordered, but, finding his expectation mistaken, he cried furiously, addressing his wife:

"What! no cabbage soup? and I wrote to you expressly that I wanted it. Perhaps there is no leg of mutton with cloves either?"

"I do not know, monsieur, I forgot to — "

"By God's thunder, what a woman, — there!" cried

Jacques, furiously, throwing the tureen cover down on the table so violently that it broke in pieces.

At the brutal exclamation of his father, Frederick betrayed his indignation by an abrupt movement.

Immediately Marie, pressing her son's hand under the table, signified her disapproval, and he restrained himself, but his quick resentment did not escape the eye of Jacques, who, after looking a long time at his son in silence, said to Bridou:

"Come, my comrade, we must content ourselves with this slop."

"It is pot luck, my old fellow," said the bailiff. "Pot luck, eh, eh, we all know that."

"Come," said Jacques, "let us at least say our grace before eating."

And he poured out a bumper for Bridou, after which he emptied almost the rest of the bottle in an enormous glass, which he was accustomed to use, and which held a pint.

The obese Hercules swallowed this bumper at one draught, then, disposing himself comfortably to serve the soup, he took in his hand an iron spoon, plated over, and bright with cleanliness.

"Why in the devil did you put this pot ladle here?" said he to Marie.

"Monsieur, I do not know," replied the young woman, looking down and stammering, "I —"

"Why not put on the table my large silver ladle, as usual," asked Jacques. "Is it because my comrade Bridou has come to dine here?"

Then, addressing his son, he said, abruptly:

"Get the silver ladle from the buffet."

"It is useless, father," said Frederick, resolutely, seeing the anguish of his mother and wishing to turn his father's anger toward himself. "The large silver ladle is not in the house; neither is the rest of the silver."

"What?" asked Jacques, stupidly.

But, not believing his ears, he seized the plate at his side, looked at it, and convinced of the truth of his son's words, he remained a moment, besotted with amazement.

Frederick and his mother exchanged glances at this critical moment.

The young man, determined to bring his father's anger on himself alone, replied, resolutely:

"It was I, father; without telling my mother, I sold the silver for —"

"Monsieur," cried Marie, addressing Jacques, "do not believe Frederick; it was I, and I alone, who — ah, well, yes, it was I who sold the silver."

Notwithstanding his wife's confession, Jacques Bastien could not believe what he had heard, so preposterous, so impossible did the whole thing appear.

Bridou himself, this time, sincerely shared the bewilderment of his friend, and the bailiff broke the silence by saying to Jacques:

"Humph, humph, old fellow, this is another affair to selling your fir-trees, I think."

Marie expected an explosion of wrath from her passionate husband. There was no such thing.

Jacques remained silent, immovable, and absorbed for a long time. His broad face was more florid than usual. He drank, one after another, two great glasses of wine, leaned his elbows on the table, with his chin in the palm of his hand, drumming convulsively on his fat cheek with his contracted fingers. Fixing on his wife's face his two little gray eyes, which glittered under his frowning eyebrows with a sinister light, he said, with apparent calmness:

"You say then, madame, that all the silver —"

"Monsieur —"

"Come, speak out, you see that I am calm."

Frederick rose instinctively and stood by his mother as if to protect her, so much did his father's composure frighten him.

"My child, sit down," said Marie, in a sweet, gentle voice.

Frederick returned to his place at the table and sat down. This unexpected movement on the part of Frederick had been observed by M. Bastien, who contented himself with questioning his wife, without changing his attitude, and continuing to drum with the ends of his fat fingers upon his left cheek.

"You say, then, madame, that the silver, that my silver —"

"Ah, well, monsieur," replied Marie, in a firm voice, "your silver, I have sold it."

"You have sold it?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And to whom?"

"To a silversmith in Pont Brillant."

"What is his name?"

"I do not know, monsieur."

"Truly?"

"It was not I who went to town to sell the silver, monsieur."

"Then who did?"

"No matter, monsieur, it is sold."

"That is true," replied Bastien, emptying his glass again; "and why did you sell it, if you please, — sell this silver which belonged to me and to me alone?"

"My friend," whispered Bridou to Jacques, "you frighten me; get angry, shriek, storm, howl, I would rather see that than to see you so calm, — your forehead is as white as a sheet and full of sweat."

Bastien did not reply to his friend and continued:

"You have, madame, sold my silver to buy what?"

"I besought you, monsieur, to send me some money to help the victims of the overflow."

"The overflow!" exclaimed Jacques, with a burst of derisive laughter. "That overflow has a famous back, it carries a good deal!"

"I will not add another word on this subject," replied Marie, in a firm and dignified tone.

A long silence followed.

Evidently Jacques was making a superhuman effort to restrain the violence of his feelings. He was obliged to rise from the table and go to the window, which he opened, in spite of the rigour of the weather, to cool his burning forehead, for wicked designs were fermenting in his brain, and he made every effort to conceal them. When he took his place at the table again, he threw on Marie a strange and sinister look, and said to her, with an accent of cruel satisfaction:

"If you knew how it is with me, since you have sold my silver, you would know that you have done me a real service."

Although the ambiguity of these words caused her some disquietude, and she was alarmed at the incomprehensible calmness of her husband, Marie felt a momentary relief, for she had feared that M. Bastien, yielding to the natural brutality of his character, might so far forget himself as to come to injury and threats in the presence of her son, who would interpose between his mother and father.

Without addressing another word to his wife, Jacques drank another glass of wine and said to his companion:

"Come, old fellow, we are going to eat cold dough, on plates of beaten iron; it is pot luck, as you say."

"Jacques," said the bailiff, more and more frightened at the calmness of Bastien, "I assure you I am not at all hungry."

"I — I am ravenous," said Jacques, with a satirical laugh; "it is very easily accounted for; joy always increases my appetite, so, at the present moment, I am as hungry as a vulture."

"Joy, joy," repeated the bailiff; "you do not look at all joyous."

And Bridou added, addressing Marie, as if to reassure

her, for, notwithstanding the hardness of his heart, he was almost moved to compassion:

"It is all the same, madame, our brave Jacques now and then opens his eyes and grits his teeth, but at the bottom, he is —"

"Good man," added Bastien, pouring out another drink; "such a good man, that he is a fool for it. It is all the same, you see, my old Bridou, I would not give my evening for fifty thousand francs. I have just realised a magnificent profit."

Jacques Bastien never jested on money matters, and these words, "I would not give my evening for fifty thousand francs," he pronounced with such an accent of certainty and satisfaction that not only the bailiff believed in the mysterious words, but Madame Bastien believed in them also, and felt her secret terror increasing.

In fact, the affected calmness of her husband, who — a strange and unnatural thing — grew paler in proportion as he drank, his satirical smile, his eyes glittering with a sort of baleful joy, when from time to time he looked at Frederick and his mother, carried anguish to the soul of the young woman. So, at the end of the repast, she said to Jacques, after having made a sign to Frederick to follow her:

"Monsieur, I feel very much fatigued and quite ill; I ask your permission to retire with my son."

"As you please," replied Jacques, with a guttural laugh, already showing excess of drink, "as you please; where there is constraint there is no pleasure. Do not incommode yourself. I shall incommode myself no longer. Be calm, have patience."

At these words, as ambiguous as the first, which no doubt hid some mental reservation, Marie, having nothing to say, rose, while Frederick, obeying a glance from his mother, approached Jacques, and said to him, respectfully:

" Good night, father."

Jacques turned around to Bridou, without replying to his son, and said, as he measured Frederick with a satirical glance:

" How do you like him?"

" My faith, a very pretty boy."

" Seventeen years old, soon," added Jacques.

"That is a fine age for us," added the bailiff, exchanging an intelligent glance with Jacques, who said rudely to his son:

" Good evening."

Marie and Frederick retired, leaving Jacques Bastien and his comrade Bridou at the table.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

When Madame Bastien and Frederick, coming out of the dining-room, passed by the library, they saw David there, standing in the door watching for them.

Marie extended her hand to him cordially, and said, making allusion to the two outrages to which the preceptor had so patiently submitted:

"Can you still have the same devotion to us?"

A loud noise of moving chairs and bursts of laughter from the dining-room informed the young woman that her husband and the bailiff were rising from the table. She hastened to her apartment with Frederick, after having said to David, with a look of despair:

"To-morrow morning, M. David. I am now in unspeakable agony."

"To-morrow, my friend," said Frederick, in his turn, to David, as he passed him.

Then Marie and her son entered their apartment, while David ascended to the garret chamber he was to share with André.

Scarcely had he entered his mother's chamber when Frederick threw himself in his mother's arms and cried with bitterness:

"Oh, mother! we were so happy before the arrival of —"

"Not a word more, my child; you are speaking of your father," interrupted Marie. "Embrace me more tenderly than ever; you have need of it, and so have I; but no recriminations of your father."

"My God! mother, you did not hear what he said to M. Bridou?"

"When your father said, 'Frederick will soon be seventeen?'"

"Yes, and that man said to my father, 'It is a good age for us.'"

"I, as well as you, my child, heard his words."

"'A good age for us,' — what does he mean by that, mother?"

"I do not know," replied the young woman, hoping to calm and reassure her son. "Perhaps we attach too much to these words, — more than they deserve."

After a short silence, Frederick said to Marie, in an altered voice:

"Listen to me, mother. Since you desire it, I shall always have that respect for my father which I owe to him, but I tell you frankly, understand me, — if my father thinks ever of separating me from you and M. David —"

"Frederick!" cried the young woman, alarmed at the desperate resolution she read in her son's countenance, "why suppose what is impossible — to separate us! to take you out of the hands of M. David, and that, too, at a time when — But no, I repeat, your father has too much reason, too much good sense, to conceive such an idea."

"May Heaven hear you, mother, but I swear to you, and you know my will is firm, that no human power shall separate me from you and M. David, and that I will boldly say to my father. Let him respect our affection, our indissoluble ties, and I will bless him; but if he dares to put his hand on our happiness —"

"My son!"

"Oh, mother! our happiness, it is your life, and your life I will defend against my father himself, you understand."

"My God! my God! Frederick, I beseech you!"

"Oh, let him take care! let him take care! two or three times this evening my blood revolted against his words."

"Stop, Frederick, do not speak so; you will make me insane. Why, then, oh, my God! will you predict such painful, or rather, such impossible things! You only terrify yourself and render yourself desperate."

"Very well, mother, we will wait; but believe me, the frightful calmness of my father when he learned of the sale of the silver hides something. We expected to see him burst forth into a passion, but he remained impassible, he became pale. I never saw him so pale, mother," said Frederick, embracing his mother with an expression of tenderness and alarm. "Mother, I am chilled to the heart, some danger threatens us."

"Frederick," replied the young woman, with a tone of agonising reproach, "you frighten me terribly, and after all, your father will act according to his own will."

"And I also, mother, I will have mine."

"But why suppose your father has intentions which he has not and cannot have? Believe me, my child, in spite of his roughness, he loves you; why should he wish to grieve you? Why separate us and ruin the most beautiful, and the most assured hopes that a mother ever had for the future of her son? Wait, — I am sure that our friend M. David will say the same thing that I say to you. Come, calm yourself, take courage, we will have perhaps to pass through some disagreeable experiences, but we have already endured so much that is cruel, we cannot have much more to suffer."

Frederick shook his head sadly, embraced his mother with more than usual tenderness, and entered his room.

Madame Bastien rang for Marguerite.

The old servant soon appeared.

"Marguerite," said the young woman to her, "is M. Bastien still at table?"

"Unfortunately he is, madame."

"Unfortunately?"

"Bless me, I have never seen monsieur with such a wicked face; he drinks — he drinks until it is frightful, and in spite of it all he is pale. He has just asked me for a bottle of brandy and —"

"That is sufficient, Marguerite," said Marie, interrupting her servant; "have you prepared a bed in André's chamber for M. David?"

"Yes, madame, M. David has just gone up there, but old André says he would rather sleep in the stable than dare stay in the same chamber with M. David. Besides, André will hardly have time to go to sleep to-night."

"Why so?"

"Monsieur has ordered André to hitch the horse at three o'clock in the morning."

"What! M. Bastien is going away in the middle of the night?"

"Monsieur said the moon rose at half past two, and he wished to be at Blémur with M. Bridou at the break of day, so as to be able to return here to-morrow evening."

"That is different. Come, good night, Marguerite."

"Madame —"

"What do you want?"

"My God, madame! I do not know if I can dare —"

"Come, Marguerite, what is the matter?"

"Madame has interrupted me every time I spoke of monsieur, and yet I had something to say — something —"

And the servant stopped, looking at her mistress so uneasily, so sadly that the young woman exclaimed:

"My God! what is the matter with you, Marguerite? You frighten me."

"Ah, well, madame, when I went into the dining-room to give to monsieur the bottle of brandy he ordered, M. Bridou said to him, with a surprised and alarmed expression, 'Jacques, you will never do that.' Monsieur

seeing me enter, made a sign to M. Bridou to hush, but when I went out, I — madame will excuse me perhaps on account of my intention — "

"Go on, Marguerite."

"I went out of the dining-room, but I stopped a moment behind the door, and I heard M. Bridou say to monsieur, 'Jacques, I say again, you will not do that.' Then monsieur replied, 'You will see.' I did not dare to listen to more of the conversation, and — "

"You were right, Marguerite; you had already been guilty of an indiscretion which only your attachment to me can excuse."

"What! What monsieur said does not frighten you?"

"The words of M. Bastien which you have reported to me prove nothing, Marguerite; you are, I think, needlessly alarmed."

"God grant it, madame."

"Go and see, I pray you, if M. Bastien and M. Bridou are still at the table. If they have left it, you can go to bed, I have no further need of you."

Marguerite returned in a few moments, and said to her mistress:

"I have just given a light to monsieur and to M. Bridou, madame, they bade each other good night; but, wait, madame," said Marguerite, interrupting herself, "do you hear? that is M. Bridou now going up-stairs."

In fact the steps of Bastien's boon companion resounded over the wooden staircase which conducted to the chamber formerly occupied by David.

"Has M. Bastien entered his chamber?" asked Marie of the servant.

"I can see from the outside if there is a light in monsieur's chamber," replied Marguerite.

The servant went out again, returned in a few moments, and said to her mistress, as she shivered with the cold:

"Monsieur is in his chamber, madame; I can see the

light through the blinds. My God, how bitter the cold is; it is snowing in great heaps, and I forgot to make your fire, madame. Perhaps you wish to sit up."

"No, Marguerite, thank you, I am going to bed immediately." Marie added, after a moment's reflection: "My shutters are closed, are they not?"

"Yes, madame."

"And those of my son's chamber also?"

"Yes, madame."

"Good night, Marguerite, come to me to-morrow at the break of day."

"Madame has need of nothing else?"

"No, thank you."

"Good night, madame."

Marguerite went out.

Marie locked her door, went to see if her shutters were closed, and slowly undressed, a prey to the most poignant anxiety, thinking of the various events of the evening, the mysterious words uttered by the bailiff, Bridou on the subject of Frederick, and especially of those words which passed between Jacques and his friend, which Marguerite had overheard:

"Jacques, you will not do that?"

"You will see."

The young woman, wrapped in her dressing-gown, prepared as usual to embrace her son before going to bed, when she heard heavy walking in the corridor which opened into her apartment.

No doubt it was the step of Jacques Bastien.

Marie listened.

The steps discontinued.

Soon the sound of this heavy walking was succeeded by the noise of two hands, outside the door, groping in the darkness for the lock and key.

Jacques Bastien wished to enter his wife's apartment.

She, knowing the door was locked, at first felt assured, but soon, reflecting that if she did not open the door to

her husband, he might in his brutal violence make a loud noise, or perhaps break the door, and by this uproar waken her son and call David down-stairs, and thus bring about a collision, the possible consequences of which filled her with alarm, she decided to open the door. Then, remembering that her son was in the next chamber, and that but a few minutes before all her maternal authority and tenderness were required to prevent an expression of his indignation against Jacques Bastien, she recalled his bitter words, and the resolution with which he uttered them:

"To make an attempt on our happiness, would be to attempt your life, mother, and your life I will defend even against my father."

Marie felt that no human power, not even her own, could prevent Frederick's interposition this time, if Jacques Bastien, intoxicated as in all probability he was, should enter her chamber, and attack her with invective and threatening.

The alternative was terrible.

Not to open the door would be to expose herself to a deplorable scandal. To open it was to set the son and father face to face, one drunk with anger and wine, the other exasperated by the sense of his mother's wrongs.

These reflections, as rapid as thought, Marie had scarcely ended, when she heard Jacques Bastien, who had found the key, turn it in the lock and, finding an obstacle inside, shake the door violently.

Then Marie took a desperate resolution; she ran to the door, removed the bolt, and standing on the threshold as if to forbid entrance to Jacques Bastien, she said to him in a low, supplicating voice:

"My son is sleeping, monsieur; if you have something to say to me, come, I beseech you, in the library."

The unhappy woman paused a moment.

Her courage failed her, so terrible was the expression of Bastien's countenance.

The rays of the lamp placed upon the chimneypiece in Marie's bedchamber shone full upon the face of M. Bastien, which, thus brilliantly lighted, seemed to glare upon the darkness of the corridor.

This man, who had the breadth of Hercules, was now frightfully pale in consequence of the reaction of long continued drink and anger. He was about half drunk; his coarse, thick hair fell low on his forehead and almost concealed his little, wicked gray eyes. His bull-like neck was naked and his blouse open, as well as his great coat and vest, exposing a part of a powerful and hairy chest.

At the sight of this man, Marie, as we have said, felt for a moment her courage give way.

But, reflecting that the excited state in which M. Bastien was, only rendered him more passionate, and more intractable, that he would not hesitate at any violence or outburst of temper, and that then the intervention of David and Frederick would, unfortunately, become inevitable, the young woman, brave as she always was, thanked Heaven that her son had heard nothing, seized the lamp on the chimneypiece, returned to her husband, who stood immovable on the threshold, and said to him in a low voice:

"Let us go in the library, monsieur. I am afraid, as I told you, of waking my son."

M. Bastien appeared to take counsel with himself before yielding to Marie's desire.

After several minutes' hesitation, during which the young woman almost died of anguish, the Hercules replied:

"Well, to come to the point, I prefer that; come, go on before me."

Marie, preceding Jacques Bastien in the corridor, soon entered the library.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MADAME BASTIEN, whose heart was beating violently, set the lamp on the chimneypiece in the library, and said to her husband:

"What do you wish, monsieur?"

Jacques had reached that degree of drunkenness which is not madness, which leaves the mind even quite clear, but which renders the will implacable; he did not at first reply to the question of Marie, who said again:

"Please, monsieur, I beg you, tell me what you wish of me."

Jacques, both hands in the pockets of his blouse, stood directly in front of his wife; sometimes he knit his eyebrows with a sinister expression as he stared at her, sometimes he smiled with a satirical air.

Finally, addressing Marie with a slow and uncertain voice, for his half-drunken condition retarded his utterance and obliged him to make frequent pauses, he said to her:

"Madame it is about seventeen years and a half that we have been married, is it not?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"What good have you been to me?"

"Monsieur!"

"You have not even served me as a wife."

Marie, her cheeks coloured with shame and indignation, started to go out.

Bastien barred the passage and cried elevating his voice:

"Stop there!"

"Silence, monsieur!" said the unhappy woman, whose fears were renewed lest David and Frederick should be awakened by the noise of an altercation.

So, waiting for new outrages, and resigned beforehand to submit to them, she said to Jacques, in a trembling voice:

"For pity's sake, monsieur, do not speak so loud, they will hear you. I will listen to you, as painful as this conversation is to me."

"I tell you that you have been no good to me since we were married; a servant hired for wages would have kept my house better than you, and with less expense."

"Perhaps, monsieur," replied Marie, with a bitter smile, "this servant might not, as I, have reared your son—"

"To hate his father?"

"Monsieur!"

"Enough! I saw that clearly this evening. If you had not prevented him, that blackguard would have used abusive language to me and ranged himself on your side. It is very plain, and he is not the only one. As soon as I arrive here, in my own house, each one of you says, 'There is the enemy, there is the wild boar, there is the ogre!' Ah, well, let me be an ogre; that suits me very well."

"You are mistaken, monsieur; I have always taught your son the respect that is due you, and this evening even—"

"Enough!" cried Hercules, interrupting his wife.

And he pursued his thought with the tenacity of the drunkard, who concentrates upon one idea all the lucidity of mind left to him.

"I tell you again," continued he, "that since our marriage you have served me in nothing; you have made of my son a coxcomb, who requires preceptors and

pleasure excursions to drive away his hysterics, and who, over and above that, curses me; you have rifled my wood and my silver, you have stolen from me!"

"Monsieur!" cried Marie, indignant.

"You have stolen from me!" repeated Hercules, in such a thundering voice, that Marie clasped her hands, and murmured:

"Oh, for mercy's sake, monsieur, not so loud, not so loud!"

"Now then, since in these seventeen years you have done me nothing but evil, this cannot last."

"What do you mean?"

"I have enough of it."

"But—"

"I have too much of it. I want no more of it."

"I do not understand you, monsieur."

"No? Well, then, when a person or a thing plagues me, I get rid of it, and the quicker the better."

Notwithstanding his excitement, Madame Bastien did not for a moment believe that her husband thought of killing her; so, trying to discover his intention, under his mask of besotted anger, she said to him:

"If I understand you rightly, monsieur, you have decided to rid yourself of persons who annoy you or displease you?"

"Just so! As your little puppy of a son plagues me, to-morrow I will get rid of him."

"You will get rid of him? But, monsieur—"

"Silence! Bridou will take him; he will take him away with him to-morrow evening, upon our return from Blémur."

"You say, monsieur, that M. Bridou will take my son; please explain to me."

"He will take him for his board as a young clerk, and your Benjamin who is not mine will be lodged, fed, and washed, and at eighteen years will get six hundred francs, if Bridou is satisfied with him."

"Nobody will dispose of my son's future without my consent, monsieur."

"Eh!" replied Jacques, with a sort of hollow roar.

"Oh, monsieur, if you were to kill me on the spot, I would say the same thing."

"Eh!" again roared the colossus, more threatening still.

"I tell you, monsieur, that my son shall not leave me. He will continue his studies under the direction of his preceptor. I will inform you, if you wish, of the plans I have for Frederick, and —"

"Ah! that is it, is it?" cried the colossus, furious at the resistance of his wife. "Ah, well, to-morrow I will take this Latin spitter by the shoulders and kick him out of my door. Another one who plagues me, and I will get rid of. As to you —"

"What will be my fate, monsieur?"

"You shall clear the house, like the others."

"What do you say, monsieur?"

"When I have enough of a thing, or when I have too much of a thing or a person, I get rid of it."

"So, monsieur, you intend to drive me out of your house?"

"Still stubborn, are you? For seventeen years you have been no good to me, you have turned my son against me, you have plundered my wood, stolen my silver, — all that plagues me, and I wish to get rid of it. But to begin, where are your jewels?"

"My jewels?" asked Marie, astonished at this unexpected demand.

"Yes, your jewels, valued at nearly one thousand francs; go and get them and give them to me; that will compensate me for the silver you have robbed me of."

"I do not own these jewels any longer, monsieur."

"What!"

"I have sold them."

"What!" cried Jacques, stammering with anger, "you — you — you — "

"I have sold them, monsieur, at the same time the silver was sold, and for the same object."

"You lie!" cried the colossus, in a formidable voice.

"Oh, speak lower, monsieur, I implore you, speak lower."

"You are hiding your jewels to keep from paying me," added Hercules, taking a step toward his wife with his fists clenched, and his face livid with rage; "you are twice a thief!"

"Please, monsieur, do not scream so!" cried the young woman, not thinking of the grossness of the insults heaped upon her, but fearing that Frederick and David might be awakened by his loud talk.

In short, furious that he could not obtain his wife's jewels as a compensation for the loss of his silver, — the one idea which had occupied his mind the whole evening, — Jacques, excited to frenzy by wine and disappointed rage, cried out:

"Ah! you have hidden those jewels, have you? Well, it will not be to-morrow that you will go out of my house, but it will be to-night, — at once."

"Monsieur, this is a cruel jest," replied Marie, overcome by so many bitter experiences. "I desire to go to my chamber; it is late, and I am chilled. To-morrow we will talk seriously; you will then regain your self-possession, and — "

"That is as much as to say I am drunk now, eh?"

"To-morrow, monsieur. Permit me to retire."

Jacques, dreadful with anger, hatred, and drunkenness, walked up to his wife, and pointing to the dark corridor which conducted to the outside door, said:

"Go out of my house! I order you out, you double thief!"

Marie could not believe that Jacques was speaking seriously. She had been trying to end the painful con-

versation as soon as possible, to prevent the intervention of David and her son. So she answered, addressing her husband with the greatest sweetness, hoping thereby to calm him:

"Monsieur, I beseech you, go to your chamber, and let me go to mine. I repeat to you that to-morrow —"

"God's thunder!" cried Jacques, beside himself with rage, "I did not tell you to go back to your chamber, but to go out of my house. Must I take you by the shoulders and put you out?"

"Outside!" cried Marie, who understood from the ferocity of Bastien's face that he was speaking seriously.

It was ferocity, it was stupidity, but what could be expected from such a wretch, made furious by drink.

"Outside!" said Marie again, terrified. "But, monsieur, you do not mean it; it is night, it is cold."

"What is all that to me?"

"Monsieur, I beseech you, come to yourself. My God! it is one o'clock in the morning; where do you wish me to go?"

"I will —"

"But, monsieur —"

"Once more! will you go out, thief?"

And the colossus made a step toward his wife.

"Monsieur, one word, just one word!"

"Twice, will you go out?"

And Jacques took another step toward his wife.

"Please listen to me."

"Three times! will you go out?"

And the Hercules turned up his sleeves to take hold of his wife.

What could the unfortunate woman do?

Cry, — call for help?

Frederick and David would awaken, would run to the spot, and for Marie, there was something more horrible than this cruel, outrageous expulsion; it was the shame, the dreadful idea of being seen by her son fighting

against her husband, who wished to thrust her, half naked, out of his house. Her dignity as wife and as mother revolted at this thought, and above all, at the idea of a desperate struggle between her son and her husband which might result in murder, — in parricide, — for Frederick would not stop at any extremity to defend a mother driven out of the house. Marie then submitted, and when Jacques started to seize her and repeated:

"Three times! will you go out?"

"Ah, well, yes, yes, monsieur, I will go out," she replied, in a trembling voice. "I am going out immediately, but no noise, I implore you!"

Then desperate, extending her supplicating hands toward Jacques, who, still threatening, walked up to her and pointed to the outside door, Marie, going backwards step by step in the darkness, at last reached the end of the corridor.

Bastien opened the door.

A puff of icy wind rushed through the entrance.

Outside, nothing but darkness and drifting snow.

"Oh, my God! what a night!" murmured Marie, terrified in spite of her resolution, and wishing to turn back; "mercy, monsieur!"

"Good evening!" said the wretch, with a ferocious giggle, as he pushed his wife out of the door.

Then, shutting the door again, he bolted it.

Marie, bareheaded, and with no clothing but her dressing-gown, felt her feet sink into the thick layer of snow with which the floor of the porch was already covered, in spite of the rustic roof.

A ray of hope remained to the poor woman; for a moment, she believed that her husband was only perpetrating a joke as cruel as it was stupid; but she heard Jacques walking away heavily.

Soon he had reached his chamber, as Marie discovered by the light which shone through the window-blinds.

Frozen by the sharp, penetrating north wind, Marie's teeth began to chatter convulsively. She tried to reach the stables situated in a neighbouring building. Unfortunately she found the garden gate fastened, and then she remembered that this garden, surrounded by buildings on all sides, was enclosed by a fence, in the middle of which was a door which she could not succeed in opening.

Three windows overlooked this garden, two belonging to the apartment of Jacques Bastien, and the other to the dining-room, where nobody slept.

Marie had no other help to expect.

She resigned herself to her fate.

The poor creature came back to the porch, swept off the snow which covered the threshold with her hands, and already chilled, stiffened by the cold, seated herself on the stone step, barely sheltered by the roof of the porch.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

JACQUES BASTIEN, after having brutally put his wife out of the house, returned to his chamber with a tottering step, threw himself on the bed in his clothes, and fell into a profound sleep.

At three o'clock, according to the order he had given in the evening, Marguerite carried a light to her master and found him asleep; she had much difficulty in awakening him, and announced to him that old André had hitched the horse to the little carriage.

Jacques, still heavy with sleep and the consequences of his intoxication, which obscured his ideas, shook himself in his garments, like a tawny beast in his fur, passed his hand through his tangled hair, put on his back over his clothes an overcoat of goatskin with long hairs, rinsed his mouth with a full glass of brandy, and sent Marguerite to inform Bridou that all was ready for their departure.

Bastien's head was aching, his ideas confused, and he scarcely had a vague remembrance of his atrocious brutality toward his wife; he struggled painfully against a violent desire to sleep, and while waiting for his companion, he seated himself on the edge of the bed, where he was beginning to sleep again, when Bridou entered.

"Come, Jacques, come along," said the bailiff; "you look stupid all over, old fellow, shake yourself up."

"There! there!" replied M. Bastien, standing upon his legs and rubbing his eyes. "My head is heavy and my eyes full of sand, — perhaps the fresh air will revive me. Wait, Bridou, drink a drop, and then we will set

off on our journey. It is twelve miles from here to Blémur."

"To your health, then, old fellow!" said the bailiff, pouring out a glass of brandy. "Ah, so, you will not drink?"

"Yes, indeed, it will wake me up, for my brain is devilishly confused."

And, after having swallowed a new bumper of brandy, which, far from clearing his ideas, rendered them all the more confused, Bastien, preceding Bridou, went out of his chamber, followed the corridor and opened the door, through which he had driven his wife two hours before.

But Marie had left the porch where she had at first cowered.

The snow had ceased to fall.

The moon shone in the sky, the cold was becoming more and more intense. Jacques felt it keenly, for he had just swallowed two glasses of brandy, and for a few moments he seemed bewildered, walking directly before him across the lawn, instead of following the walk which led to the gate.

Bridou saw the distraction of his friend and said to him:

"Jacques, Jacques, where in the devil are you going?"

"Sure enough," responded the Hercules, stopping short and balancing himself on his legs. "Sure enough, old fellow," said he. "I do not know what is the matter with me; I am besotted this morning. I go to the right when I mean to go to the left. It is the cold which pinches me so when I come out of the house."

"It is enough to pinch one!" replied Bridou, shivering. "I have a hood and a comforter, and I am frozen."

"You chilly fellow, go on!"

"That is very easy for you to say."

"Come, Bridou, do you want my skin?"

"What! your skin?"

"My goatskin, you idiot!"

"And what will you do, Jacques?"

"Take it; when I get into the carriage the heat will fly to my head, and I shall sleep in spite of myself."

"Then, Jacques, I accept your skin all the more cheerfully, my old fellow, for if you fall asleep you will turn us over."

"Here, put it on," said Jacques, taking off his goatskin, in which his companion soon wrapped himself. "Come, now," said Bastien, passing his hand over his forehead, "I feel more like myself; I am better."

And Jacques, with a less unsteady step, reached the gate that André had just opened from the outside, as he led the old white horse, hitched to the carriage, to a convenient spot for his master.

Bastien jumped into the carriage first; Bridou, embarrassed by the goatskin, stumbled on the foot-board.

"Take care, master, take care," said old André, deceived by the goatskin, and thinking he was addressing M. Bastien. "Pay attention, master!"

"Jacques, this must be a regular lion's skin," whispered the bailiff. "Your servant takes me for you, old fellow, because I have on your cloak."

Bastien, whose mind continued to be somewhat confused, took the reins and said to André, who stood at the horse's head:

"Is the old road to Blémur good?"

"The old road? Why, nobody can pass, monsieur."

"Why?"

"Because the overflow has washed up everything, monsieur, without counting the embankment on the side of the pond which has been swept away, — so from that place the road is still covered ten feet in water."

"That is a pity, for that would have shortened our way wonderfully," replied Bastien, whipping the horse so vigorously that it started off at a full gallop.

"Softly, Jacques, softly," said the bailiff, beginning to feel concerned about his comrade's condition. "The

roads are not good and you must not upset us. Come, come now, Jacques, do pay attention! Ah, you do not look an inch before you!"

We will leave M. Bridou in his constantly increasing perplexity and will return to the farm.

As we have said, Marie, after having tried in vain to reach the stable through the garden gate, came back and cowered down in one of the corners of the porch.

During the first half-hour the cold had caused her the most painful suffering. To this torture succeeded a sort of numbness at first very distressing; then soon followed a state of almost complete insensibility, an invincible torpor, which in such circumstances often proves a transition to death.

Marie, brave as ever, preserved her presence of mind a long time and tried to divert her thoughts from the danger that she was running, saying to herself that at three o'clock in the morning there must necessarily be some stir in the house caused by the departure of M. Bastien, who wished, as Marguerite had told her, to set out on his journey at the rising of the moon.

Whether he left or not, the young woman intended to profit by the going and coming of Marguerite, and to make herself heard by rapping either on the door of the corridor or the blinds of the dining-room, and thus gain an entrance into her chamber.

But the terrible influence of the cold — the rapid and piercing effects of which were unknown to Madame Bastien — froze, so to speak, her thoughts, as it froze her limbs.

At the end of the half-hour the exhausted woman yielded to an unconquerable drowsiness, from which she would rise a moment by sheer force of courage, to fall back again into a deeper sleep than before.

About three o'clock in the morning, the light that Marguerite carried had several times shone through the

window-blinds, and her steps had resounded behind the front door.

But Marie, in an ever increasing torpor, saw nothing and heard nothing.

Fortunately, in one of the rare periods when she succeeded in rousing herself from her stupor, she trembled at the voice of Bastien; as he went out with Bridou he noisily drew the bolt of the door.

At the voice of her husband the young woman, by an almost superhuman effort of will, roused herself from her stupor, rose, although stiff and almost bent double by the icy cold, went out of the porch, and hid herself behind one of the ivy-covered posts, just as the door opened before Bastien and Bridou, who went out through the garden gate. Marie, seeing the two men depart, slipped into the house and reached her chamber without having met Marguerite. But the moment she rang, her strength failed, and she fell on the floor unconscious.

The servant ran at the sound of her mistress's bell, found her lying in the middle of the floor, and cried, as she stooped to lift her up:

"Great God! madame, what has happened to you?"

"Silence!" murmured the young woman in a feeble voice; "do not wake my son! Help me to get back to bed."

"Alas! madame," said the servant, sustaining Marie as the poor woman got into bed, "you are shivering, you are frozen."

"To-night," replied the young mother, with a failing voice, "feeling myself in pain I tried to rise to ring for you. I had not the strength, I was ill, and just this moment I dragged myself to the chimney to call you, and I—"

The young woman did not finish; her teeth clashed together, her head fell back, and she fainted.

Marguerite, frightened at the responsibility resting on

her, and losing her presence of mind entirely, cried, as she ran to Frederick's chamber:

"Monsieur, monsieur! get up! madame is very ill." Then, returning to Marie, she cried, kneeling down by the bed:

"My God! what must I do, what must I do?"

At the end of a few moments Frederick, having put on his dressing-gown, came out of his chamber.

Imagine his agony at the sight of his mother, — pale, inanimate, and from time to time writhing under a convulsive chill.

"Mother," cried Frederick, kneeling in despair by Marie's pillow. "Mother, answer me, what is the matter?"

"Alas! M. Frederick," said Marguerite, sobbing, "madame is unconscious. What shall I do, my God, what shall I do?"

"Marguerite," cried Frederick, "run and wake M. David."

While Frederick, in unspeakable terror, remained near his mother, the servant hurried to André's chamber, where David had spent the night. The preceptor, dressing himself in haste, opened the door for Marguerite.

"My God! what is the matter?"

"M. David, a great trouble, — madame —"

"Go on."

"To-night she was taken ill and rose to ring for me; all her strength failed her; she had fallen in the middle of her chamber, where she lay a long time on the floor; when I entered and helped her to bed she was frozen."

"On such a night, — it is frightful!" cried David, turning pale; "and now, how is she?"

"My God! M. David, she has fainted away. Poor M. Frederick is on his knees at her pillow sobbing; he calls her, but she hears nothing. It was he who told me to run for you, because we do not know what to do, we have all lost our head."

"You must tell André to hitch up and go in haste to Pont Brillant for Doctor Dufour. Run, run, Marguerite."

"Alas! monsieur, that is impossible. Master left this morning at three o'clock with the horse, and André is so old that he would take I do not know how much time to go to the city."

"I will go," said David, with a calmness which belied the agitation depicted in his face.

"You, M. David, go to the city on foot so far this freezing night!"

"In an hour," replied David, as he finished dressing himself for the journey, "Doctor Dufour will be here. Tell Frederick that to calm him. While waiting my return, you had better take some warm tea to Madame Bastien. Try to get her warm by covering her with care, and drawing her bed near the large fire which you must kindle immediately. Come, courage, Marguerite," added David, taking his hat and hastily descending the stairs; "be sure to tell Frederick Doctor Dufour will be here in an hour."

"Marguerite, after having conducted David to the garden gate, came to get the lamp that she had left on the threshold of the door, sheltered by the rustic porch.

As she stooped to take up the lamp she saw, half hidden by the snow, a neckerchief of orange silk belonging to Madame Bastien, and almost in the same spot she found a little slipper of red morocco encrusted, so to speak, in the snow hardened by the ice.

More and more surprised, and wondering how these articles, which evidently belonged to her mistress, came to be there, Marguerite, struck with a sudden idea, picked up the neckerchief and the slipper, then, with the aid of her lamp, she examined attentively the pavement of the corridor.

There she recognised the recent imprint of snow-

covered feet, so that in following this trace of Madame Bastien's little feet she noticed the last tracks at the door of her mistress. Suddenly Marguerite recollected that when she had assisted her mistress, overcome by the cold, to get in bed, it had not been unmade; other circumstances corroborated these observations, and the servant, terrified at the discovery she had just made, entered Madame Bastien's chamber, where Frederick was sitting near his mother.

An hour and a quarter after David's departure a cabriolet with two horses white with foam and marked with the postilion's whip stopped at the door of the farm.

David and Doctor Dufour descended from this carriage.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

About three hours had passed since the doctor had arrived at the farm.

David, discreetly withdrawn into the library, waited with mortal anxiety the news of Madame Bastien, with whom the doctor and Frederick remained.

Once only, David, standing in the door of the library, and seeing Marguerite rapidly passing, as she came from the chamber of her mistress, called, in a low voice:

"Ah, well, Marguerite?"

"Ah, M. David!" was the only reply of the weeping woman, who passed on without stopping.

"She is dying," said David, returning to the library.

And pale, his features distorted, his heart broken, he threw himself in an armchair, hid his face in his hands, and burst into tears, vainly trying to suppress his sobs.

"I have realised the despair of this restrained, hidden, impossible love," murmured he. "I thought I had suffered cruelly, — what is it to suffer derision compared to the fear of losing Marie? To lose her, — she to die — no, no! oh, but I will at least see her!"

And almost crazed with grief, David rushed across the room, but he stopped at the door.

"She is dying, perhaps, and I have no right to assist at her agony. What am I here? A stranger. Let me listen — nothing — nothing — the silence of the tomb. My God! in this chamber, where she perhaps is in the

agony of death, what is happening? Ah, some one is coming out. It is Pierre."

And David, taking one step into the corridor, saw in the twilight of the dark passage, the doctor coming out of Marie's chamber.

"Pierre," said he, in a low voice, to hasten his coming, "Pierre!"

Doctor Dufour advanced rapidly toward David, when the latter heard a voice whisper:

"Doctor, I must speak to you."

At this voice Doctor Dufour stopped abruptly before the door of the dining-room, where he entered.

"Whose is this voice?" thought David. "Is it Marguerite? My God! what has happened?" and he listened on the side where the doctor entered. "It is Pierre who is talking; his exclamations announce indignation, dismay. There, he is coming out at last; here he is."

In fact, Doctor Dufour, his face altered, and frowning with anger, entered the library, his hands still clasped in a gesture of horror, and exclaimed:

"It is horrible! it is infamous!"

David, thinking only of Marie, sprang to meet his friend.

"Pierre, in the name of Heaven, how is she? The truth! I will have courage, but for pity's sake, the truth, frightful as it may be. There is no torture equal to what I have endured here for three hours, asking myself, is she living, agonising, or dead?"

The distorted features of David, his glowing eyes, red with recent tears, the inflection of his voice, betrayed at the same time so much despair and so much love, that Doctor Dufour, although himself under the power of violent emotion, stopped short at the sight of his friend, and gazed at him some moments before replying to him.

"Pierre, you tell me nothing, nothing!" cried David, distracted with grief. "Is she dying, then?"

"No, Henri, she is not dying."

"She will live!" cried David.

At this hope, his face became transfigured; he pressed the physician to his breast, as he murmured, unable to restrain his tears:

"I shall owe you more than life, Pierre."

"Henri," replied the doctor, with a sigh, "I have not said that she would live."

"You fear?"

"Very much."

"Oh, my God! but at least you hope?"

"I dare not yet."

"And how is she at this moment?"

"More calm, she is sleeping."

"Oh, she must live, she must live, Pierre! she will live, will she not? she will live?"

"Henri, you love her."

Recalled to himself by these words of his friend, David trembled, remained silent, with his eyes fixed on the eyes of the doctor.

The latter answered, in a grave and sad tone:

"Henri, you love her. I have not surprised your secret. You have just revealed it yourself."

"I?"

"By your grief."

"It is true, I love her."

"Henri," cried the doctor, with tears in his eyes and with deep emotion, "Henri, I pity you, oh, I pity you."

"It is a love without hope, I know it; but let her live, and I will bless the torments that I must endure near her, because her son, who binds us for ever, will always be a link between her and me."

"Yes, your love is without hope, Henri; yes, delicacy will always prevent your ever letting Marie suspect your sentiments. But that is not all, and I repeat it to you, Henri, you are more to be pitied than you think."

"My God! Pierre, what do you mean?"

"Do you know? But wait, my blood boils, my indignation burns, everything in me revolts, because I cannot speak of such a base atrocity with calmness."

"Unhappy woman, it concerns her. Oh, speak, speak, I pray you. You crush me, you kill me!"

"Just now I was coming to join you."

"And some one stopped you in the passage."

"It was Marguerite. Do you know where Madame Bastien spent a part of the night?"

"What do you mean?"

"She spent it out of her house."

"She? the night out of her house?"

"Yes, her husband thrust her outdoors, half naked, this bitter cold night."

David shuddered through his whole body, then pressing both hands to his forehead as if to restrain the violence of his thoughts, he said to the doctor, in a broken voice:

"Wait, Pierre; I have heard your words, but I do not understand their import. A cloud seems to be passing over my mind."

"At first, neither did I understand it, my friend; it was too monstrous. Marguerite, yesterday evening, a little while after leaving her mistress, heard a long conversation, sometimes in a low voice, sometimes with violence, in the library, then walking in the corridor; then the noise of a door which opened and shut, then nothing more. In the night, after the departure of M. Bastien, Marguerite, rung up by her mistress, thought at first Marie had fainted, but later, by certain indications, she had the proof that her mistress had been compelled to stay from midnight until three o'clock, in the porch, exposed to all the severity of this freezing night. So, this sickness, mortal perhaps —"

"But it is a murder!" cried David, mad with grief and rage. "That man is an assassin!"

"The wretch was drunk as Marguerite has told me;

it was in consequence of an altercation with the unhappy woman that he thrust her outdoors."

"Pierre, this man will return presently; he has insulted me grossly twice; I intend to provoke him and kill him."

"Henri, keep calm."

"I wish to kill him."

"Listen to me."

"If he refuses to fight me, I will assassinate him and kill myself afterward. Marie shall be delivered from him."

"Henri, Henri! this is madness!"

"Oh, my God! she, she, treated in this way!" said David, in a heartrending voice. "To know that this angel of purity, this adorable mother and saint, is always at the mercy of this stupid and brutal man! And do you not see that if she does not die this time, he will kill her some other time?"

"I believe it, Henri, and yet he need not have her in his power."

"And you are not willing that I —"

"Henri," cried the doctor, seizing his friend's hand with effusion, "Henri, noble and excellent heart, come to yourself, be what you have always been, full of generosity and courage, — yes, of courage, for it is necessary to have courage to accomplish a cruel sacrifice, but one indispensable to the salvation of Madame Bastien."

"A sacrifice for Marie's salvation! Oh, speak, speak!"

"Brave, noble heart, you are yourself again, and I was wrong to tell you that you were more to be pitied than you thought, for souls like yours live upon sacrifices and renunciations. Listen to me, Henri, — admitting that I can save Madame Bastien from the disease she has contracted to-night, a most dangerous inflammation of the lungs, this angelic woman ought not to remain in the power of this wretch."

"Go on, finish!"

"There is an honourable and lawful means of snatching from this man the victim that he has tortured for seventeen years."

"And what is this means?"

"A legal separation."

"And how is it to be obtained?"

"The atrocious conduct of this man, during this night, is a serious charge of cruelty. Marguerite will testify to it; it will not be necessary to have more to obtain a separation, and besides, I myself will see the judges, and I will tell them, with all the ardour and indignation of an honest heart, the conduct of Bastien toward his wife since his marriage; I will tell them of Marie's angelic resignation, of her admirable devotion to her son, and above all, of the purity of her life."

"Stop, Pierre; a little while ago I spoke like a madman. To beastly wickedness, I responded with homicidal violence. You are right, Madame Bastien must be separated from her husband, that she may be free." And at this thought, David could not repress a thrill of hope. "Yes, let her be free, and then, being able to dispose of her son's future, and —"

"Henri," said the physician, interrupting his friend, "you must understand that to make this separation worthy and honourable on Marie's part, it is essential that you go away."

"I!" cried David, shocked at the words of the doctor, who continued, in a firm voice:

"Henri, I repeat to you, it is absolutely essential for you to go away."

"Leave her, leave her dying? Never!"

"My friend!"

"Never! neither would she consent to it."

"What do you mean?"

"No, she would not allow me to depart, — abandon her son, whom I love as my child, — abandon him in the very moment we are about to realise our highest hopes, —

it would be the most culpable folly. I would not do it, and this dear boy would not endure it either. You do not know what he is to me, you do not know what I am to him; indissoluble ties unite us, — him and his mother, and myself."

"I know all that, Henri; I know the power of these ties; I know too that your love, of which perhaps Marie is ignorant, is as pure as it is respectful."

"And you wish to send me away?"

"Yes, because I know that Marie and you are both young; because you are compelled every moment to associate intimately; because the expression of the gratitude she owes you would, to suspicious eyes, seem the expression of a more tender sentiment; because, in fact, I know that the old Marquise of Pont Brillant, shameless old dowager if there is one, has made at the castle, in the presence of twenty persons, wicked and satirical allusions to the age and appearance of the preceptor that Madame Bastien has chosen for her son."

"Oh, that is infamous!"

"Yes, it is infamous; yes, it is shameful; but you will give plausibility to these calumnies, if you remain in this house while Madame Bastien, after seventeen years of marriage, is suing for a separation."

"But I swear to you, Pierre, she knows nothing of my love; for you know well that I would rather die than say one word to her of this love, because she owes the salvation of her son to me."

"I have no doubt of you, or of her, but I repeat to you, that your prolonged sojourn in this house will prove an irreparable injury to Marie."

"Pierre, these fears are foolish."

"These fears are only too well founded; your presence here, so wickedly misconstrued, will be a reproach to the stainless purity of Marie's life; her request for a separation will be judged beforehand, and perhaps rejected. Then Bastien, more than ever irritated against his

wife, will treat her with renewed cruelty, and he will kill her, Henri, — kill her legally, kill her honourably, as so many husbands kill their wives."

The justice of the doctor's words was evident; David could not fail to recognise it. Wishing, however, to cling to a last and forlorn hope, he said:

"But, really, Pierre, how can I leave Frederick, who, this present moment, needs all my care? For his mental health is scarcely confirmed. Dear child! to leave at the very time when I see such a glorious future in store for him?"

"But, remember, pray, that this evening M. Bastien will be here, that he will tell you, perhaps, to leave the house, — for after all, he is master of this house; then what will you do?"

The conversation between David and the doctor was interrupted by Frederick, who entered hurriedly and said to Doctor Dufour:

"My mother has just awakened from her sleep, and desires to speak to you at once."

"My child," said the physician to Frederick, "I have something special to say to your mother. Please remain here with David."

And turning to his friend, he added:

"Henri, I can rely on you; you understand me?"

"I understand you."

"You give me your word to do what you ought to do?"

After a long hesitation, during which Frederick, surprised at these mysterious words, looked alternately at the doctor and David, the latter replied, in a firm voice, as he extended his hand to his friend.

"Pierre, you have my word."

"That is well," said the physician with deep emotion, as he pressed David's hand.

Then he added:

"I have only fulfilled one half of my task."

"What do you mean, Pierre?" cried David, as he saw the physician directing his steps to Marie's chamber, "what are you going to do?"

"My duty," replied the doctor.

And, leaving David and Frederick in the library, he entered Madame Bastien's chamber.

CHAPTER XL.

WHEN Doctor Dufour entered Madame Bastien's room, he found her in bed, and Marguerite seated by her pillow.

Marie, whose beauty was so radiant the evening before, was pale and exhausted; a burning fever coloured her cheeks and made her large blue eyes glitter under her heavy, half-closed eyelids; from time to time, a sharp, dry cough racked her bosom, upon which the sick woman frequently pressed her hand, as if to suppress a keen, agonising pain.

At the sight of the doctor, Madame Bastien said to her servant:

"Leave us, Marguerite."

"Well, how are you?" said the doctor, when they were left alone.

"This cough pains me and tears my chest, my good doctor; my sleep has been disturbed by dreadful dreams, the effect of the fever, no doubt, but, we will not speak of that," added Marie with an accent of angelic resignation. "I wish to consult you upon important matters, good doctor, and I must hurry, for, two or three times since I awoke, I have felt my thoughts slipping away from me."

"Do not distress yourself about that, for it belongs to the weak state which almost always follows the excitement of fever."

"I wished to speak to you first, to you alone, before

asking M. David and my son to come in, as we will have all three to confer together afterward."

"I am listening to you, madame."

"You know my husband came home yesterday evening."

"I know it," said the doctor, unable to restrain a shudder of indignation.

"I had a long and painful discussion with him on the subject of my son. In spite of my claims and my prayer, M. Bastien is resolved to enter Frederick with M. Bridou as a bailiff's clerk. That would make it necessary for me to thank M. David for his care, and separate myself from my son."

"And you cannot consent to that?"

"So long as there is a spark of life left in me, I will defend my right to my child. As to him, you know the firmness of his character. Never will he be willing to leave me or forsake M. David and enter the house of M. Bridou. M. Bastien will soon return, and he is going to claim the right to take away my son."

Marie, overcome by the emotion she was trying to combat, was obliged to pause a moment, and was attacked by such a dangerous fit of coughing, united to such a painful oppression in the chest, that the doctor involuntarily raised his eyes to Heaven with grief. After taking a drink prepared by the doctor, Marie continued:

"Such is our position, my dear doctor, and before the return of M. Bastien, we must resolve upon something decisive, or —" and Marie became deathly pale —"or something terrible will happen here, for you know how violent M. Bastien is, and how resolute Frederick is; and as to me, I feel that, sick as I am, to take away my son is to strike me with death."

"Madame, the moments are precious; permit me first to appeal to your sincerity and frankness."

"Speak."

"Yesterday evening, at the conclusion of the discus-

sion which you had with your husband, a most atrocious thing occurred, and that night — "

"Monsieur."

"I know all, madame."

"Once more, doctor — "

"I know all, I tell you, and, with your habitual courage, you did, I am certain of it, submit to this abominable treatment, in order not to make public this outrageous deed, and to avoid a collision between your son and your husband. Oh, do not try to deny it; your safety and the safety of your son depend upon the sincerity of your confession."

"My safety! my son's safety!"

"Come, madame, do you think the law has no redress for such atrocities as those your husband has been guilty of toward you? No, no! and there are witnesses of his unreasonable brutality. And these witnesses, Marguerite and myself, to whom you have applied for medical attention, as a consequence of the injuries you have sustained, we, I say, will authorise and justify your demand for separation. This demand must be formulated to-day."

"A separation!" cried Marie, clasping her hands in a transport of joy, "will it be possible?"

"Yes, and you will obtain it; trust yourself to me, madame. I will see your judges, I will establish your rights, your illness, your grievances; but before formulating this demand," added the doctor, with hesitation, for he appreciated the delicacy of the question raised, "it is essential for David to go away."

At these words, Marie trembled with surprise and distress; with her eyes fixed on those of Doctor Dufour, she tried to divine his thought, unable to comprehend why he, David's best friend, should insist upon his going away.

"Separate us from M. David," said she finally, "at the time my son has so much need of his care?"

"Madame, believe me, the departure of David is essential. David himself realises it, because he has resolved to go."

"M. David!"

"I have his word."

"It is impossible!"

"I have his word, madame."

"He! he! abandon us at such a time!"

"In order to save you and your son."

"In order to save us?"

"His presence near you, madame, would compromise the success of your demand for a separation."

"Why is that?"

There was so much candour and sincerity in Marie's question, she revealed so thoroughly the innocence of her heart, that the doctor had not the heart to give a new pain to this angelic creature by telling her of the odious reports being circulated about herself and David, so he replied:

"You cannot doubt, madame, the devotion and affection of David. He knows all that is to be regretted in his departure, all that is most painful to Frederick, but he knows also that his departure is absolutely necessary.

"He, depart!"

At the heartrending tone with which Marie uttered the two words, "He, depart," the doctor realised the depth of Marie's love for David for the first time, and as he thought of this deep and pure affection, the outcome of the noblest sentiments and the holiest feelings, his heart sank. He knew well Marie's virtue and David's delicacy, and hence he saw no end to this fatal passion.

Marie, after weeping silently turned her pale, sad, and tear-stained face to the doctor, and said to him, sorrowfully:

"M. David thinks it is best to go away, and my son

and I will resign ourselves to it. Your friend has given too many proofs of his devotion to permit us to question his heart for a moment, but I must tell you his departure will be a terrible blow to my son."

"But you will remain with him, madame, for I do not doubt that once your separation is obtained, you will be allowed to keep your son."

"You hope then they will leave me my son?"

"Without doubt."

"How," replied Marie, clasping her hands and looking at the doctor with inexpressible anguish, "could there be a doubt that they will leave me my son?"

"He is more than sixteen years old, and in a case of separation, the son follows the father; a daughter would be given to you."

"But, then," replied Marie, all excited with fear, "what good is this separation, if I am not sure of keeping my son?"

"First, to assure your peace, your life perhaps, because your husband —"

"But my son, my son?"

"We will do everything in the world to have him given to you."

"And if they do not give him to me?"

"Alas! madame."

"Let us think no more of this separation, Doctor Dufour."

"Think, then, madame, what it is to remain at the mercy of a wretch who will kill you some day."

"But at least, before that happens, he will not have taken my son away from me."

"He will take him away from you, madame. Did he not wish to do so yesterday?"

"Oh, my God!" cried Marie, falling back on her pillow with such an expression of grief and despair that the doctor ran to her, exclaiming:

"In the name of Heaven, what is the matter with you?"

"Doctor Dufour," said Marie, in a feeble voice, closing her eyes and overcome by grief, "I am utterly exhausted. No matter which way I look at the future, it is horrible; what shall I do, my God! what shall I do? The hour approaches when my husband will return and take away my son with him. Oh, for my sake, put yourself between Frederick and his father! Oh, if you only knew what I dread, I—"

And the words expired on her lips, for the unhappy woman again sank into unconsciousness.

The doctor hastened to ring the bell violently, then he returned to the help of Madame Bastien.

The servant not replying to the bell, the doctor opened the door and called:

"Marguerite! Marguerite!"

At the alarmed voice of the doctor, Frederick, who had remained in the library, rushed to his mother's chamber, followed by David, who, forgetting all propriety, and yielding to an irresistible impulse, wished to see the woman he was about to leave, for the last time.

"Frederick, support your mother," cried Doctor Dufour, "and you, Henri, go quick for some cold water in the dining-room — somewhere. I do not know where Marguerite is."

David ran to execute the doctor's orders, while Frederick, supporting his mother in his arms, for she was almost without consciousness, said to the doctor, in a broken voice:

"Oh, my God! this fainting fit, how long it lasts! how pale she is! Help, help!"

Marguerite suddenly appeared; her distorted features presented a singular expression of astonishment, terror, and satisfaction.

"Doctor," cried she, almost breathless, "if you only knew!"

"Pierre, here is what you asked me for," said David, running and giving him a bottle filled with fresh water, of which the doctor poured out several spoonfuls in a cup.

Then addressing the servant in a low voice, he said:

"Marguerite, give me that vial, there on the chimney-piece. But what is the matter with you?" added Doctor Dufour, as he saw the old servant standing still and trembling in every limb. "Speak, do speak!"

"Ah! monsieur," replied the servant, in a whisper, "it is what takes my breath away. If you only knew!"

"Well, finish, what is it?"

"Master is dead!"

At these words the doctor stepped back, forgot Marie, stood petrified, and looked at the servant, unable to utter a word.

David experienced such a violent commotion of feeling that he was obliged to lean against the wainscoting.

Frederick, holding his mother in his arms, turned abruptly toward Marguerite, murmuring:

"Oh, my God! Dead — dead — my father!"

And he hid his face in his mother's bosom.

Marie, although in a swoon, caused by complete prostration of her strength, was sufficiently conscious to hear.

Marguerite's words, "Master is dead," reached her ears, but dimly and vague as the thought of a dream.

The doctor broke the solemn silence which had greeted the servant's words and said to her:

"How do you know? Explain yourself."

"This night," replied the servant, "master, about six miles from here, wanted to cross a ford on a route covered by the overflow. The horse and carriage were dragged into the water. They have not found the body of M. Bridou, but they recognised master's body by his goatskin cloak; it was ground under the wheels of the mill at the pond; they found half his coat in one of the wheels; one of the pockets contained several letters

addressed to master. It is by that the mayor of Blémur, who is there with a gendarme, knew that it was master who was drowned, and he has drawn up the act of death."

When the servant had finished her recital in the midst of a religious silence, Madame Bastien recalled to herself entirely by the profound and violent reaction produced by this unexpected news, clasped her son to her bosom passionately, and said:

"We will never leave each other, never!"

Marie was about to seek David's eyes, instinctively, but an exquisite delicacy forbade it; she turned her eyes away, her pallor was replaced by a faint colour, and she pressed her son in a new embrace.

CHAPTER XLI.

About three weeks had elapsed since the death of M. Bastien had been announced.

So many violent and contrary emotions had complicated Marie's disease, and rendered it still more dangerous. For two days her condition had been almost desperate, then by degrees it improved, thanks to the skill of Doctor Dufour and the ineffable hope from which the young woman drew enough force, enough desire to live, to combat death.

At the end of a few days the convalescence of Marie began, and although this convalescence was necessarily tedious and demanded the most careful attention, for fear of a relapse more to be dreaded than the disease itself, all alarm had ceased.

Is it necessary to say that since the announcement of the death of M. Bastien, David and Marie had not uttered one word which made allusion to their secret and assured hopes?

These two pure souls had the exquisite bashfulness of happiness, and although the death of Jacques Bastien could not be regretted, David and Marie respected religiously his ashes, which were scarcely cold, however unworthy of respect the man had been.

The illness of Madame Bastien, and the fears entertained so many days for her life, produced a sincere sorrow in the country, and her recovery a universal joy; these testimonials of touching sympathy, addressed as much to Frederick as to his mother, and the consciousness of a future which had, so to speak, no fault save that of being too bright, confirmed and hastened the

convalescence of Marie, who, at the end of three weeks, felt only an excessive weakness which prevented her leaving her chamber.

As soon as her condition was no longer critical, she desired Frederick to undertake the studies planned for him by David, and to receive a part of them in her apartment, and she experienced an indescribable delight in seeing, united under her eyes, those two beings so much loved, and from whom she had so dreaded to be separated. Her presence at these lessons gave her a thousand joys. First the tender, enlightened interest of David, then the indomitable enthusiasm of the young man, who longed for a glorious, illustrious destiny, that he might be the pride and joy of his mother, and satisfy his ambitious envy, whose purified flame burned within him more than ever.

It had been decided by common consent that Frederick should first enter the Polytechnic School, and that from there, according to his inclination, he should follow one of those numerous careers opened to him by this encyclopædical school, — war, the navy, art, letters, or science.

These few words will give an insight, somewhat incomplete, into the ideal felicity in which these three tender and noble creatures lived from the moment that Marie's condition ceased to inspire fear; a felicity altogether new to all, since, even in the happy days which followed Frederick's recovery, the coming of M. Bastien, often forgotten, yet always imminent, would appear on their bright horizon like a threatening cloud.

At this time, on the contrary, as far as the view of Marie and David and Frederick could extend, they beheld an azure sky of such serene splendour that its almost limitless magnificence sometimes dazzled them.

Three weeks had elapsed since the announcement of the death of M. Bastien.

Two o'clock had just sounded, and Frederick, assisted by Marguerite and old André, was filling the vases on the chimneypiece in the library with snowdrops, pale Bengal roses, winter heliotropes, and holly branches, ornamented with their coral berries. In the middle of the mantel, a portrait of Frederick, an admirable likeness done in pastel by David, was placed on an easel; a bright fire burned in the chimney, and on a table were preparations for a simple and rustic collation.

The three accomplices, as they were jestingly called, who presided at the preparations for this little festivity, or, in a word, this surprise party, were walking about on tiptoe and whispering, for fear Madame Bastien might suspect what was taking place. That day, for the first time since her illness, the young woman was to come out of her chamber and remain several hours in the library. Frederick also, and the two old servants, tried to give an air of mirth to this room, and David, without Marie's knowledge, was busy with Frederick's portrait, which she was to see that day for the first time.

During the mysterious coming and going, Marie was alone in her chamber with David.

The young woman clothed in mourning, half recumbent on a sick-chair, with silent happiness contemplated David, seated at a work-table and occupied in correcting one of Frederick's exercises.

Suddenly David, pursuing his reading, said, in a low voice:

"It is incomprehensible!"

"What is incomprehensible, M. David?"

"The really remarkable progress of this child, madame. We have been studying geometry only three weeks, and his aptitude for the exact sciences develops with the same rapidity as his other faculties."

"If I must tell you, M. David, this aptitude in Frederick astonishes me; it seems to me that those

studies which require imagination and sentiment are what he would prefer."

"And that, madame, is what surprises and charms me. In this dear child everything obeys the same impulse, everything develops visibly, and nothing is injured. I read to you yesterday his last efforts, which were really eloquent, really beautiful."

"The fact is, M. David, that there is a striking difference between this last production and the best things he wrote before this terrible malady, which, thanks to you will lead to Frederick's regeneration. All that I now dread for him is excess of work."

"And for that reason, I moderate, as much as I can, his eagerness to learn, his impatient and jealous enthusiasm, his passionate longing for the future which he wishes to make illustrious and glorious, and that future will be his."

"Ah, M. David, what joy, what transport for us, if our anticipations are realised!"

It is impossible to reproduce the tenderness Marie expressed in those words, "we — our anticipations," which in themselves revealed the secret projects for happiness, tacitly formed by Marie and David.

The latter continued:

"Believe me, madame, we will see him great in heart and in intellect. There is in him an extraordinary energy, which has developed twofold through this dreaded envy which has so much alarmed us."

"Indeed, on yesterday, M. David, he said to me, cheerfully:

"'Mother, now when I see the castle of Pont Brillant rising in the distance, — that once made me so unhappy, — I throw upon it only a glance of friendly regard and defiance.'"

"And you will see, madame, if, in eight or ten years, the name of Frederick Bastien will not resound more gloriously than that of the young marquis."

"I have the pride to share your hope, M. David. Guided by us, I do not know to what height my son may not attain."

"Then after a short silence Marie added:

"But do you know it all seems like a dream? When I think that it is scarcely two months ago, the evening of your arrival, you were there at that table, looking over Frederick's exercises, and deploring, like me, the veil which lay over the mind of this unhappy child."

"Do you recollect, madame, that gloomy, frozen silence, against which all our efforts proved unavailing?"

"And that might when, crazy with terror, I ran up-stairs to you, to beseech you not to abandon my son, as if you could have abandoned him."

"Say, madame, is there not a sort of charm in these painful memories, now that we are in perfect security and happiness?"

"Yes, there is a sad charm in them, but how much I prefer certain hopes! So, M. David, I will tell you that I have made many plans to-night."

"Let us hear them, madame."

"There is one, very foolish, — really impossible."

"So much the better, they are usually the most charming."

"When our Frederick enters the Polytechnic School, we must be separated from him. Oh, make yourself easy, I will be brave, on one condition."

"And what is that condition?"

"You are going to laugh at it, because it is so childish, perhaps ridiculous. Ah, well, I wish we could dwell near him. And if I must confess all to you, my desire would be to take lodgings opposite the school, if that is possible. Now you are going to laugh at me."

"I do not laugh at this idea at all, madame; I think it is an excellent one, because, thanks to this proximity, you will be able to see our dear boy twice a day, and,

besides visits, there will be two long days when we will have him all to ourselves."

"Really," answered Marie, smiling, "you do not think I am too fond a mother?"

"My reply is very short, madame. As it is always necessary to provide for things in the distance, I am going to write to Paris to-day to a reliable person who will watch for a convenient lodging opposite the school and engage it for us."

"How good you are!"

"Very easy kindness, really, to share with you the joy of being near our dear boy."

Marie remained silent a moment; then tears of gratitude filled her eyes and she said, with inexpressible emotion, as she turned toward David:

"How sweet happiness is!"

And her tearful eyes sought and met the eyes of David; for a long time they gazed at each other in silent, divine ecstasy. The door of the chamber opened and Marguerite said to the preceptor, with an air at the same time joyous and mysterious:

"M. David, will you come, if you please?"

"And my son," asked Marie, "where is he?"

"M. Frederick is busy, madame, very busy," replied Marguerite, exchanging a glance of intelligence with the preceptor, who was going out of the door.

"If madame will permit it," said Marguerite, "I will stay with her, in case she may need something."

"Ah, Marguerite, Marguerite," said the young wife, smiling and shaking her head, "they are plotting something here."

"Why do you think that, madame?"

"Oh, I am very discerning! Since this morning, such goings and comings I have heard in the corridor, Frederick is absent during his study hour, and an unusual noise in the library; so you see—"

"I can assure you, madame, that—"

"Good! good! you are taking advantage of my condition," said Marie, smiling. "They all know that I cannot walk about and see myself what is happening out there."

"Oh, madame, what do you think?"

"Well, Marguerite, I think it is a surprise."

"A surprise, madame?"

"Come, my good Marguerite, tell me all about it, I beg you; then I shall be happier sooner, and so I shall be happier a longer time."

"Madame," said Marguerite, heroically, "that would be treason."

At that moment old André opened the door half-way, put his head in, looking very radiant and mysterious, and said to the servant:

"Marguerite, they want to know where is the thing that — that —"

"Ah, my God! he is going to say some foolishness; he never does anything else!" cried Marguerite, running to the door, where she conversed some moments with André in a low tone, after which she came back to her mistress, who said to her, smiling:

"Come, Marguerite, since you are relentless, I am going to see for myself."

"Madame, you think so? You are not able yet to walk after such an illness."

"Do not scold me, I submit; I will not spoil the surprise, but how impatient I am to know!"

The door of the library opened again.

It was David, Frederick, and Doctor Dufour.

Marguerite went away, after having whispered to Frederick:

"M. Frederick, when you hear me cough behind the door, all will be ready."

And the old servant went out.

At the sight of the doctor, Madame Bastien said, cheerfully:

"Oh, now that you are here, my good doctor, I do not doubt any longer that there is a conspiracy."

"A conspiracy?" answered Doctor Dufour, affecting astonishment, while David and Frederick exchanged a smile.

"Yes, yes," replied Marie. "A surprise they are preparing for me. But I warn you that surprises are very dangerous to poor invalids like me, and you had a great deal better tell me beforehand."

"All that I can tell you, my dear impatient and beautiful invalid, is that we have agreed that to-day is the day when you must make an attempt to walk alone for the first time, and that it is my duty, yes, madame, my duty to assist this exertion of your powers."

Scarcely had the doctor uttered these words, when they heard Marguerite cough with great affectation behind the door.

"Come, mother," said Frederick to his mother, tenderly, "have courage now, we are going to take a long walk in the house."

"Oh, I feel so strong that you will be astonished," replied Marie, smiling and trying to rise from her sick-chair, and succeeding with great difficulty, for she was very weak.

It was a beautiful and pathetic picture.

Marie, having risen, advanced with an uncertain step, David at her right, the doctor at her left, ready to sustain her if she fainted, while Frederick, in front of her, was slowly walking backward, holding out his arms, as one does to a child that is attempting his first steps.

"You see how strong I am!" said the young woman, stepping slowly toward her son, who smiled upon her with tenderness. "Where are you going to take me?"

"You are going to see, mother."

Frederick had scarcely uttered these words, when a fearful, terrible shriek sounded from behind the door.

"Where's her husband."

[illegible] by Vittorio Matteo

AL MARCEL

It was Marguerite. Then the door opened suddenly, and a bantering, ringing voice said at the same time:

"Make a note of it! The big old fellow is living yet!"

Marie, who was opposite the door, uttered a terror-stricken cry and fell backward.

She saw her husband Jacques Bastien.

CHAPTER XLII.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that at the moment of departure for Blémur, Bridou put on Jacques Bastien's greatcoat, made of goatskin. Bastien, half drunk, had, in spite of old André's advice to the contrary, persisted in fording a place inundated by the pond as well as by the waters of the Loire; the horse lost his footing, and the carriage was dragged down the current. Bridou succeeded in getting out of the carriage, but was swept by the torrent under the wheels of the mill and crushed to death. A part of the goatskin coat was caught in one of the wheels. In the pocket of the garment were found several letters addressed to M. Bastien. Hence the fatal error. It was supposed that M. Bastien had been crushed under the wheels, and that the body of the bailiff had disappeared under the water.

Jacques Bastien, incommoded by his great corpulence, had not, in spite of his efforts, succeeded in getting out of the carriage; this circumstance saved him. The horse, after having been dragged some distance with the drift, regained his footing, but soon, exhausted by fatigue, and attempting to ascend a very steep hill, he tumbled down. Jacques, thrown forward, received a deep wound in the head, and lay insensible for some time, when, at the break of day, some labourers going to the fields found him, picked him up and carried him to an isolated farm quite distant from the scene of the disaster.

Jacques remained a long time in this farmhouse, seriously ill from the results of his wound, and a dangerous attack produced by fright and prolonged immer-

sion in the ice-cold water. When he was in a condition to write to his wife, he intentionally neglected to do so, promising himself — as no doubt rumours of his death were current — to make his resurrection a stupid and brutal joke, for he well understood with what sentiments his household would receive the news of his tragic end.

In his project, Jacques, as we have seen, did not fail.

When, however, he saw his wife fall, overwhelmed at the sight of him, he thought he had killed her, and fled from his house in a terror which partook of the nature of frenzy.

Marie was not the only one overcome by this terrible blow.

Frederick was not less shocked by the sudden appearance of Bastien, and, seeing his mother fall dead as it were on the floor, fell fainting in the arms of Doctor Dufour.

The poor boy was not borne to his own chamber, but to the library, and a bed was there prepared for him, as Doctor Dufour feared, with reason, that the removal of Frederick to his own chamber, which opened into his mother's, might be followed by consequences disastrous to both.

The doctor could not give his attention to both at the same time, and occupied himself first with Marie, who, scarcely convalescent from her previous illness, was alas! struck with a mortal blow.

When Doctor Dufour returned to Frederick he found him prostrated by cerebral congestion, and soon his condition was desperate.

When Marie regained consciousness she realised that her end was approaching, and asked to see her son immediately.

The embarrassment of Marguerite, her pallor and tears, her look of despair, and the excuses and evasions she made to explain the absence of Frederick in that solemn moment were a revelation to the young mother.

She felt, so to speak, that, like herself, her son was about to die; then she asked to see David.

Marguerite ushered the preceptor into the room and left him alone with Madame Bastien, whose angelic features already bore the impress of death. With her cold white hand she made a sign to David to sit down at her bedside and said to him:

"How is my son?"

"Madame —"

"He is not in his chamber; they are hiding him from me."

"Do not think —"

"I understand all; he is in a desperate state I know, but as my end is near, too, I wish to say farewell to him, Henri."

For the first and the last time, alas! Marie called David by his baptismal name.

"Farewell!" repeated he, with a heartrending sob "you wish to say farewell!"

"But I cannot die without telling you how much I have loved you. You knew it, did you not, my friend?"

"And you say that you are going to die! No, no! Marie, the power of my love will give new life to you!" cried David, under a sort of aberration of mind. "Die! Oh, why will you die? We love each other so much."

"Yes, our love is great, my friend, and for me it began from the day you restored the life of my son's soul."

"Oh, woe! woe!"

"No, Henri, my death is not a woe for us. It seems to me, you understand, that, in the moment of leaving this life, my soul, freed from terrestrial ties, can read the future. Henri, do you know what would have been our fate?"

"You ask me to tell you that, when this morning our plans were so —"

"Listen to me, my friend; there are profound mysteries of maternal love which, perhaps, are never unveiled but

in supreme moments. As long as I felt myself free, the future appeared radiant to me, as it did to you, Henri, and perhaps for a few months, you and my son and myself would have mingled our lives in the same bliss."

"Oh, that dream! that dream!"

"The dream was beautiful, Henri; perhaps the awakening would have been cruel."

"What do you mean?"

"You know how much my son loves me. You know that all passionate affection has its jealousy; sooner or later, he would have been jealous of my love for you, Henri."

"He, he jealous of me?"

"You can believe a mother's heart; I am not mistaken."

"Alas, you only wish to make my sorrow less grievous; brave and generous to the last!"

"Say I am a mother to the last. Listen to me still, Henri. In uniting myself to you, I would have lost my name, that humble name that my son wanted above everything to make illustrious, because that name was mine, because everything in the poor child had reference to me."

"Oh, yes, you were in all his thoughts; when he thought he was dying, he cried, 'My mother!' and his first cry, as he began his march to a glorious destiny, was still, 'My mother!'"

"My friend, let us not deceive ourselves. What would have been our grief, if, just when we were about to be united, the fear of arousing my son's jealousy, perhaps would have stopped me? And however painful to have renounced our love, think how much more horrible it would have been to see, perhaps, the development of Frederick's jealousy after our union. What could we have done then? What would have become of us?"

"No, no, Marie, do not believe that. Frederick loves

me, too, and he would have sacrificed himself to your happiness and mine."

"Sacrificed? Yes, my friend, he would have sacrificed himself. Oh, I know it, not a word, not a complaint would have passed his lips. Always loving, always tender, he would have smiled on us sadly, and then by degrees, we would have seen him at last wasting away."

"Oh, my God, that is dreadful! Woe to me!" murmured David, with bitter lamentation. "Woe to me!"

"Joy to you, Henri, because you have been the most generous of men," cried Marie, with an exaltation which imparted a superhuman expression to her dying features, "Joy to you, Henri, for you have been loved, oh, passionately loved, without costing a tear or one moment of shame to the loyal heart which adores you. Yes, Henri, I have loved you without hesitation, without resistance. I have loved you with pride, with serenity, because my love for you, Henri, had all the sacred sweetness of duty. Courage, then, my friend, let the memory of Marie and Frederick Bastien sustain you and console you."

"What do you mean? Frederick! Oh, he at least will remain to me!"

"My son will not survive me."

"Frederick?"

"I feel it here, yes, Henri, here in my heart; I tell you he will die."

"But, a little while ago, Pierre came out of the chamber where your son is lying, and told me he had not given up all hope. No, no, for him to die, too, would be more than I could bear,"

"Why do you say that, Henri?"

"Great God! you — you, his mother, ask that question!"

"I told you, my friend, there are profound mysteries in maternal love. I think it would be a dreadful evil to survive my son, and Frederick thinks as I do; he loves me

as much as I love him, and he does not desire to survive me."

"Oh, what misery for me to lose you both!"

"Marie and Frederick cannot be separated; neither in this world nor in the other, my friend."

"Ah, you and he are happy!"

"Henri, my strength is gone, the chill of death is on me. Give me your hand, your dear and faithful hand."

David threw himself on his knees at the bedside of the young woman, covering her hand with tears and kisses; he burst into sobs.

Marie continued talking, her voice growing more and more feeble.

"One last request, Henri; you will grant it, if it is possible. M. Bastien has spoken to me of his desire to sell this house; I would not like to have strangers profane this home, where my life has been passed, as well as the life of my son; for my life dates from the day I became a mother. Doctor Dufour, your best friend, dwells near here, you would like to live near him some day. Hasten that day, Henri; you will find great consolation in a heart like his."

"Oh, Marie, this house will be the object of a religious care — but — "

"Thank you, Henri, oh, thank you, that thought consoles me. A last prayer: I do not wish to be separated from my son; you understand me, do you not?"

Scarcely had Marie uttered these words when a great noise was heard in the corridor.

Marguerite in terror called the doctor.

Suddenly Madame Bastien's door was thrown open violently. Frederick entered, livid as a corpse, dragging after him a piece of the bed linen, like a winding-sheet, while Marguerite was trying in vain to hold him back.

A last ray of intelligence, the filial instinct perhaps, led this child to die near his mother.

David, who was kneeling at the bedside of the young woman, rose, bewildered, as if he had seen a spectre.

"Mother! mother!" cried Frederick, in an agonising voice, throwing himself on Marie's bed, and enfolding her in his arms, as the doctor ran to them in dismay.

"Oh, come, my child, come!" murmured Marie, embracing her son in a last embrace with convulsive joy, "now it is for ever!"

These were the last words of the young mother.

Frederick and Marie breathed out their souls in a supreme embrace.

EPILOGUE.

We began this story supposing a tourist, going from the city of Pont Brillant to the castle of the same name, would pass the humble home of Marie Bastien.

We finish this story with a like supposition.

If this tourist had travelled from Pont Brillant to the castle eighteen months after the death of Frederick and Marie, he would have found nothing changed in the farm.

The same elegant simplicity reigned in this humble abode; the same wild flowers were carefully tended by old André; the same century-old grove shaded the verdant lawn through which the limpid brook wound its way.

But the tourist would not have seen without emotion, under the shade of the grove, and not far from the little murmuring cascade, a tombstone of white marble on which he could read the words: "Marie and Frederick Bastien."

Before this tomb, which was sheltered by a rustic porch, already covered with ivy and climbing flowers, was placed the little boat presented to Frederick at the time of the overflow, on which could be read the inscription: "The poor people of the valley to Frederick Bastien."

If the tourist had chanced to pass this grove at sunrise or at sunset, he would have seen a man tall of stature and clad in mourning, with hair as white as snow, although his face was young, approaching this tomb in religious meditation.

This man was David.

He had not failed in the mission entrusted to him by Marie.

Nothing was changed without or within the house. The chamber of the young mother, that of Frederick, and the library, filled with the uncompleted tasks left by the son of Madame Bastien, all remained as on the day of the death of the mother and child.

The chamber of Jacques Bastien was walled up.

David continued to inhabit the garret chamber which he occupied as preceptor. Marguerite was his only servant.

Doctor Dufour came every day to see David, near whom be wished to establish himself, when he could trust his patronage to a young physician newly arrived in Pont Brillant.

As a memorial to his young brother and to Frederick, David — that his grief might not be barren of result — transformed one of the barns on the farm into a schoolroom, and there, every day, he instructed the children of the neighbouring farmers. In order to assure the benefit of his instruction, the preceptor gave a small indemnity to the parents of the pupils, inasmuch as the children forced by the poverty of their families to go out to work could not avail themselves of public education.

We will suppose that our tourist, after having paused before the modest tomb of Marie and Frederick, would meet some inhabitant of the valley.

"My good man," the tourist might have said to him, "pray, whose is that tomb down there under those old oaks?"

"It is the tomb of the good saint of our country, monsieur."

"What is his name?"

"Frederick Bastien, monsieur, and his good angel of a mother is buried with him."

"You are weeping, my good man."

"Yes, monsieur, as all weep who knew that angel mother and her son."

"They were, then, much loved by the people of the country?"

"Wait, monsieur; do you see that tall fine castle down there?"

"The Castle of Pont Brillant?"

"The young marquis and his grandmother are richer than the king. Good year or bad year, they give a great deal of money to the poor, and yet, if the name of the young marquis is mentioned among the good people of the valley once, the names of Frederick Bastien and his mother are mentioned a hundred times."

"And why is that?"

"Because, instead of money, which they did not have, the mother gave the poor her kind heart, and the half of her bread, and the son, when it was necessary, his life to save the life of others, as I and mine can testify, without counting other families whom he rescued at the risk of his own life at the great overflow two years ago. So, you see, monsieur, the name of the good saint of the country will endure longer in the valley than the grand Castle of Pont Brillant. Castles crumble to the ground, while our children's children will learn from their fathers the name of Frederick Bastien."

THE END.